FINAL VERSION

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN EL SALVADOR

A CDIE Assessment

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Preface

This report represents the findings and analysis from a CDIE case study field trip to El Salvador, undertaken during July-August 1994. The study, along with two carried out simultaneously in Chile and Kenya, constitutes the second phase of a series of field studies conducted as part of a CDIE assessment of civil society and democracy. The first phase, which occurred during the spring of 1994, included field work in Bangladesh and Thailand.

As with any enterprise of this type, there have been many people whose help has been critical in getting the task accomplished. In particular, the CDIE team would like to thank Carrie Thompson of the USAID mission in San Salvador for her help in facilitating our work, and Raquel Portillo of Fundación Dr Guillermo Manuel Ungo for her assistance in lining up the many interviews we wished to conduct. All responsibility for the report, however, remains with the authors.

Acronyms

Acronyms are rendered into either English or Spanish, according to how they are explained in the text of this report; thus some Spanish acronyms (e.g., ARENA) are accounted for in English, while others (e.g., ORDEN) are explained in Spanish. Acronyms used only when introduced are not included in this listing.

ADESCO	*Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal*
ADESCOP	ADESCO Pesquera
ARENA	Nationalist Republican Alliance
CD	Democratic Convergence
CDA	*Consejo Departmental de Alcaldes*
CDIE	Center for Development Information and Evaluation
CEB	*Comunidad eclesial de base*
Centro DEMOS	*Centro de Estudios Estratégicos para Fortalecer la Democracia Salvadoreña*
COMURES	*Corporación de las Municipalidades de la República de El Salvador*
CONARA	*Comisión Nacional de Restauración de Areas*
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil society organization
DIDECO	*Dirección de Desarrollo Comunal*
EEC	European Economic Community
FDR	Revolutionary Democratic Front
FMLN	*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*
FUPAD	*Fundación Panamericana de Desarrollo*
FUSADES	*Fundación Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo Económica y Social*
GAO	(United States) General Accounting Office
GOES	Government of El Salvador
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ISDEM	*Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal*
MEA	Municipalities in Action (*Municipalidades en Acción*)
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement
NGO	Non-government organization
NRP	National Reconstruction Program
ONUSAL	United Nations Organization in El Salvador
ORDEN	*Organización Democrática Nacionalista*
PACT	Private Agencies Collaborating Together
PCN	Party of National Conciliation
PDC	Christian Democratic Party
PDDH	*Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*
PN	National Police
PNC	National Civil Police
PRUD	Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification
SalvaNATURA	*Fundación Ecológica de El Salvador*
SEMA	Executive Secretariat for the Environment
SETEFE	Technical Secretariat for External Planning
SRN	*Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional*
UCS	*Unión Comunal Salvadoreña*
UDN	National Democratic Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNES	*Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña*
UNO	National Opposition Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America

Executive Summary

This report represents (along with two companion studies of Chile and Kenya) the second wave in a series of field studies being conducted as part of USAID's assessment of civil society and democracy. As a CDIE assessment, the present inquiry is not a project or program evaluation of USAID activities in El Salvador. Rather this civil society sectoral study has two basic purposes:

- to assess recent experience of USAID and other donors with efforts to promote democracy by supporting civil society; and
- to derive implications for future programming in the civil society sector that would be useful to USAID.

It is anticipated that an evaluation synthesis will be prepared, in which the insights of all five field studies are distilled and brought together into a more general treatment of civil society and democracy as a donor strategy.

The principal attraction of El Salvador as a case study in civil society as supporting democracy lies in the reconciliation process now under way there. In early 1992 El Salvador ended some twelve years of bitter and severe civil conflict with a peace accord between the two sides that led to a reconciliation/reconstruction process designed to bring combatants as well as their supporters from both sides into a single national polity and economy. Assistance to civil society organizations has been an important part of that process for both USAID and other donor agencies, multilateral as well as bilateral.

This experience presents a number of lessons to be analyzed and distilled that may well have relevance for other political systems emerging from prolonged civil conflict as they attempt to rebuild functioning societies. Because of the central importance of the reconciliation enterprise in El Salvador, the CDIE team concentrated the bulk of its efforts in that direction, though it gave some attention to other areas as well, namely human rights, environment, umbrella NGOs and the legislature.

Background. Much of El Salvador's modern history has been an series of cycles characterized first by gradual expansion of political demand from the lower classes, then by government-initiated repression and finally by a politically quiescent population which remained passive until the next cycle began to move forward. The most virulent instance was the *Matanza* (massacre) of the early 1930s, when it is estimated that more than 30,000 people were essentially slaughtered by a government bent on putting down political protest of every stripe. Less egregious repetitions of the cycle occurred with the peasant unrest of the 1870s and 1890s, then later on with the repressions of the mid-1940s and early 1960s.

The civil war that started at the beginning of the 1980s threatened to repeat the scenario, and indeed repression was a very heavy element in what ensued, an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives, the vast majority of them civilians killed by GOES forces. But instead of a repetition of the *Matanza*, the conflict had worn down to what amounted to a stalemate by the end of the decade, in which neither side could win but each could hang on more or less indefinitely. A long series of negotiations eventuated in a peace accord signed in early 1992, in which the major features were initiatives to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and to reconcile the combatants, their families and their supporters on the two sides into a unified society. This effort to bring together a sundered polity has been and continues as the principal task confronting the country's national leadership.

Many members of the international donor community met in Washington in the spring of 1992 to pledge a package of assistance for El Salvador's rebuilding enterprise, which totaled some US$ 3.2 billion among all the donors, to be allocated over the next four years. Civil society figured prominently in both the physical reconstruction and the social reconciliation initiatives, and for this reason constituted the primary focus of the CDIE team's attentions.

Rebuilding civil society: the elite level. The challenge of reintegration can be seen as having basically two dimensions – an elite level and a mass level. At the elite level some reconciliation came about as a by-product of opening the electoral system to participation by former guerrillas, and some was possible because of the similar background and class origins of many of the leaders from the two sides. Ethnic homogeneity must be mentioned as well as a factor making reconciliation easier in El Salvador than could be expected in systems characterized by deep cleavages of tribe, clan, race, religion and the like. Beyond these factors a different sort of contribution has come through a USAID-assisted NGO named Centro DEMOS, which has orchestrated a 7-month long series of intense thrice-weekly workshops involving more than 50 leaders from all sides of the political spectrum. Over this time, leaders do appear to have gained a significant appreciation of (if not necessarily agreement with) each other's perspectives, an experience that hopefully will contribute to building a better comity between them in the future.

Rebuilding civil society: the mass level. Reconciliation and reconstruction is a much larger and arguably more difficult process when it comes to the mass level. Here the main focus is necessarily on the countryside, in particular the "ex-conflictive zones" where most of the combat took place. Much of this rural reconstruction is of course large-scale engineering projects, such as bridges destroyed in the fighting (presently being rebuilt with Japanese assistance), but then a good part of it is very small-scale infrastructure like municipal buildings, cooperative structures and individual houses. On the reconciliation side, much of the donor effort is being devoted to a land-reform program designed to settle ex-combatants from both sides onto newly

purchased smallholdings, but there is also considerable interest in training ex-combatants for other occupations, helping them get started in new professions, restoring public health and educational enterprises and the like. NGOs have been encouraged to take on much of this effort, and consequently civil society has a major role in the overall schema of rebuilding Salvadoran society.

USAID assistance has moved along two principal fronts in this process, insofar as civil society in the ex-conflictive zones are concerned: the Municipalities in Action program (known by its Spanish acronym as MEA); and the National Reconstruction Program (NRP).

MEA builds on the municipal institution created in the mid-1980s (but in fact based on Spanish colonial practices of the 18th century) called the cabildo abierto, or open town meeting. El Salvador is divided into some 262 municipalities (of which over 200 have less than 20,000 population, though they range in size up to San Salvador, the capital city with over 500,000 inhabitants), and each one is required under the law to have cabildos four times a year. The MEA program began its work in the late 1980s, stipulating that it would fund only projects proposed and discussed in a cabildo, with the hope that such a requirement would stimulate popular interest and build popular support for the projects selected. The MEA program was enlarged after the peace accords, and by early 1994 had completed more than 8,500 projects, almost all of them quite small (< US$ 10,000). Local NGOs play a major role in suggesting projects at the cabildos and in implementing those projects approved. An external audit by Price Waterhouse showed very few problems with the program, which by 1994 had allocated slightly over US$ 130 million to it.

The other USAID-supported effort at rural reconstruction operates through the Secretaría de Reconstrucción Nacional (SRN), a GOES agency that channels donor funds to NGOs operating at the local level. This initiative will have allocated approximately US$ 80 million to NGOs and over US$ 200 million overall to the National Reconstruction Program by the time it winds up in 1996. With the SRN program, NGOs must propose project activities, design plans, keep accounts, etc., in accord with USAID standards, which is a difficult task for many of NGOs formerly aligned with the guerrilla movement, but USAID has sponsored directly or indirectly (through the SRN) what are called in El Salvador "umbrella NGOs," which undertake to train in-country NGOs in the practices needed to obtain and retain donor-provided funding.

Human rights. During the civil war, the human rights situation was perilous, as military-supported death squads roamed the country with virtual impunity. Nor were the guerrilla forces innocent of violating human rights as they assassinated GOES officials and suspected sympathizers, though in terms of sheer numbers their targets were far fewer. One outcome of the peace accords was to establish a United Nations-sponsored Truth Commission to investigate the violence since 1980 (it submitted its report in 1993). A second consequence was a commitment to replace the

discredited National Police with a newly constituted National Civil Police. And third, an ombudsman organization with investigative powers (the *Procuraduría para la Defense de los Derechos Humanos*) was set up, to be complemented initially by a human rights office at the United Nations mission (ONUSAL) charged with supervising the peace accords.

All these efforts contributed greatly to improving the human rights environment in El Salvador, but political violence has not completely ceased there, and murders still occur that appear strongly to have political motivations from within the military and the police, as indicated in a UN-sponsored report issued while the CDIE team was visiting El Salvador in the summer of 1994 (which was quite fully reported in the press). It is fortunate that there remain active several NGOs (most notably *Tutela Legal*, an agency of the Catholic Archdiocese in San Salvador) that continue to be vociferous in denouncing human rights violations, even perhaps to the extent of pushing the evidence considerably further than strict objectivity would indicate, for such efforts serve to keep the public aware of lingering problems and serve continual notice on the GOES that violations will come to light. Prosecuting violators through the Salvadoran justice system still presents grave problems, and impunity continues as a reality,[1] but public denunciation of human rights violations is surely the first step in improving the situation, and that seems to be proceeding satisfactorily.

Environment. This is a relatively new sector in El Salvador, with all but a very few NGOs not more than two or three years old. Thus far there appear to be two fairly distinct kinds of environmental NGOs at work, the first more denunciatory in their approach while the second are more inclined to function within the mainstream. Thus the first type works at arousing citizen consciousness about environmental abuse and degradation, while the second takes on a more constructive role in seeking solutions. The GOES has shown some interest in the ecological sector, setting up an environmental secretariat under the Agriculture Ministry, and has drawn up a national strategy and action plan for the environment. Initially it included citizen consultation in drawing up the plan, but this citizen input aspect seems to have been dropped out as the plan was finalized. In short, there is some popular activity in this sector, but its influence on the GOES appears to be rather modest thus far.

Lessons emergent. Several lessons come out of this CDIE assessment, dealing with a number of factors relevant to civil society and democracy.

1. *The peace environment.* In a situation like that faced by El Salvador, the real "enabling environment" for civil society (cf. CDIE evaluation design paper) lies in the nature of conflict

[1] USAID's current judicial reform project is addressing some of the problems in this area.

settlement. Most especially, just **how** a polity emerges from civil conflict is very important. Here there seemed a recognition on both sides that a workable deal had to be made, that to regress to a combat that neither side could win was not a acceptable option. This has evidently not been the case in settlements worked out in Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, but it may well be the pattern in Mozambique, possibly Rwanda.

2. *Equity in the reconciliation process.* A frequent criticism of donor support for the peace accords, particularly USAID support, is that it has tended to favor NGOs favorable to the GOES. And there does in fact appear to be some bias in that direction (e.g., HI report 1994). Several factors would appear to explain this bias:

- pro-government NGOs and municipalities have the experience and capacity to deal with bureaucratic aspects of seeking resources; by the time the ex-insurrectionaries master these arts (even with donor help of the sort provided by USAID to the "umbrella NGOs") available funds are likely to be exhausted; in addition, pro-government organizations (official as well as NGOs) have more mainstream political savvy, can manipulate the system better to their advantage (e.g., the idea of setting up "foundations" in FMLN areas to manage SRN funds).
- bureaucratic convenience makes equal allocation by geographical unit the easiest method for allocation (as opposed to allocation by degree of war damage sustained), which means lightly affected areas get more relative to need than heavily devastated areas; given the much greater firepower wielded by the government during the war, it is the former rebel zones that are most damaged.
- donors in general, but USAID in particular, have a built-in policy conflict on the equity issue here; Congress and the White House want an equitable share of funds to go to the ex-rebel side, but USAID is not granted an exemption from the auditing/accounting requirements imposed on it, thus FMLN NGOs can't be treated more loosely than others. The result is a bias toward government-oriented NGOs.
- the key GOES role in allocating funds facilitates a bias in favor of pro-government organizations; USAID participation in the process of distributing SRN funds can attenuate such a bias somewhat, but it would be unrealistic to expect an American presence to be able to eliminate all bias.

3. *Sustainability.* Collectively the international donor community pledged some US$ 3.2 billion to assist the peace process in El Salvador, but this assistance is time-bound and is sure to diminish drastically after 1996, especially as donors (which have been experiencing decreasing overall foreign assistance budgets anyhow) get drawn off to new crises, disasters and opportunities to assist in such breakthroughs as the Gaza-West Bank peace initiative. Indeed, in El Salvador donor allocations have already begun to decrease, as shown in Figure 1. In El Salvador one consequence of the sudden infusion of foreign funding after the peace accords was

a mushroom growth of NGOs, and surely a consequence of the imminent withdrawal of such funds will be a severe shakeout among the NGO community, with inauspicious effects for civil society. To be sure, NGOs have no rights to funding as an entitlement, but little more than apprehensive thought appeared to have been given in any quarter about what all this portends for the effort to build civil society in El Salvador by the time of the CDIE team visit in the summer of 1994. Concern was apparent among both donors and NGOs themselves, but concrete ideas for dealing with the prospect of declining funds had yet to emerge. The point, then, is that donors sponsoring civil society through NGOs should also devote attention to how their efforts could be sustained after external assistance ends.

4. *Human rights.* Here it is essential to have noisy advocacy NGOs and a free press, in order to keep government ombudsman agencies (the Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos) at their jobs. But the proper NGO task here is to pressure the government organization, not to substitute for it.

5. *Environment.* In this area, a combination of advocacy/denunciatory NGOs and constructive/policy oriented NGOs is useful, perhaps essential to developing sound environmental practices. Either without the other would be must less effective.

6. *Media.* The role of the media is critical in all these areas. Without it, government will not be accountable, people will not know whether peace accords are being observed, impunity will go unnoted, and the environment can be pillaged unbeknownst to the citizenry.

7. *Umbrella NGOs.* These organizations serve mainly to facilitate flow of donor resources to domestic NGOs, and to "capacitate" the latter to deal with donors and GOES. Unlike their counterparts in Bangladesh and Thailand, they do not seem to have an advocacy function, representing their NGO constituencies to GOES.

I. Introduction and background to the study

This report represents one of five field studies being conducted as part of USAID's assessment of civil society and democracy. The assessment is being undertaken by the Agency's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) as the second in a series of inquiries in the democracy sector. As in the first such assessment – which examined the rule of law (see Blair and Hansen 1994) – the objectives of CDIE's civil society inquiry are to examine and analyze the experience of USAID and other donors over the past decade or so with a view to distilling out lessons on what has worked, what has not, why this has been so, and what might be said to inform and guide future donor efforts in promoting democracy.

In sum, the civil society sectoral study has two basic purposes:

- to assess recent experience of USAID and other donors with efforts to promote democracy by supporting civil society; and
- to derive implications for future programming in the civil society sector that would be useful to USAID.

The CDIE civil society assessment began with an "evaluation design" paper (Blair et al. 1994) that was criticized and vetted within CDIE (as well as by outside reviewers). In the second step, field studies were conducted on Bangladesh (Blair and Jutkowitz 1994) and Thailand (Hansen and Calavan 1994). After a critique of these two studies (again from both inside and outside CDIE), a second wave of three field assessments was undertaken in the summer of 1994, focusing on Chile (Jutkowitz et al.) and Kenya (Hansen et al. 1994) in addition to the present study on El Salvador. At some point in the fall of 1994, it is planned to hold a workshop to review and compare the findings of these three reports, as well as begin to compare them with those emanating from the two earlier studies. The CDIE design is to conclude the work with by integrating the findings of all the individual case studies into an "evaluation synthesis" that is expected to be finished by the end of December 1994. The primary audience for the overall evaluation is intended to be senior USAID managers as well as program and project designers at the field mission and regional bureau levels, but it is hoped that the development community more generally will find it insightful and instructive.

The conceptual design for the study is laid out in considerable detail in the evaluation design paper mentioned in the previous paragraph, but it can be briefly summarized here as an introduction to the present report. This first chapter will provide such a summary and then offer an overview of the methodology pursued in the study and a capsule sketch of the CDIE team. Chapter II will provide the background context for El Salvador with a short survey of its recent political history. The third chapter will devote

some attention to the donor role in El Salvador. In the fourth chapter, the analysis moves to the key concern of the report: the post-civil war reconciliation process in the former areas of conflict. Here the focus is on the micro-level, in particular local NGOs and governments. Chapter V concentrates on the reconciliation process at the macro-level by looking at several sectors such as human rights and environment. Then in Chapter VI, the major findings and issues emerging from the study are presented.

CDIE's civil society assessment

In a study of this nature, dealing with such traditionally indistinct and argumentative topics as "democracy" and "civil society," is it essential to pin down our definitions at the outset. **Democracy** has proven reasonably easy to delineate for this purpose, and we have adapted a typical political science textbook definition for it, holding that it consists of:

- Popular sovereignty – the state is accountable to its citizens and is accessible to them, both regularly (through elections) and continuously (through the rights of advocacy and petition);
- Political equality – all enjoy the full range of human rights and are permitted to participate on an equal basis in attaining access; and
- Political liberty – freedom of speech and assembly are guaranteed, especially for minorities.[2]

The key concepts in this definition, it should be noted are participation and accountability. Each of the three parts of the description given just above contain or imply both these elements, and both must be not just present but vigorously so if democracy is to endure.

Civil society has been somewhat more difficult to define, for there is no firm consensus on the term within the political science discipline. Thus, in the end, any definition must be in some measure stipulative. For our CDIE assessment, we have defined civil society as consisting of those non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are:

- concerned with influencing state policy (whether as their main focus or as one agenda among others); and
- are autonomous from the state (and also from political parties).

[2] This listing is adapted (with some additions) from Greenberg and Page (1993: 24-28 &ff).

This subset of NGOs can be called "civil society organizations" (CSOs), a concept that excludes those NGOs that are concerned only with service delivery, relief or productivity functions.[3]

One last term that should be delineated is the **state**, which we define as the whole set of governmental organizations from local to national level, including both bureaucracy and office-holding political leaders. The terms "government" (in its generic sense, as opposed to, say, "local government") and "state," then, are essentially synonymous. As with "civil society," these terms are ultimately at least somewhat arbitrary, but the definitions given here seem to meet the needs of the present study reasonably well.

Where civil society and democracy come together is that the former supports and strengthens the latter by increasing accountability by widening participation. In political science terminology, this concept is embodied in the phrase "building pluralism."

Before proceeding further in the present analysis, a cautionary note is in order here, concerning the scope of this CDIE assessment exercise. As with similar evaluations undertaken by the Program and Operations Assessment Division of CDIE in other areas, this study does not constitute a review or evaluation of particular projects or programs implemented by the USAID mission in El Salvador. Rather it is intended to review the overall experience of USAID as well as other donors in supporting civil society over the last several years.

It should be added that this support may well not have been intended as such at the time. For instance, the assistance provided to the Fundación Panamericana de Desarrollo (FUPAD) to enable it to in turn support environmental NGOs has not been given primarily to improve Salvadoran civil society; rather the support has been intended to help those NGOs work on their sectoral tasks with respect to the environment. Any larger civil society aspect of all this is more in the nature of a by-product, yet it is of considerable interest to this study and so warrants some analysis, even though such effects were not intended by the donor involved. Thus it is important to emphasize that this report is **not** intended in any way to "grade" donor performance, but instead is designed to assess what donor support for such organizations has led to over time with respect to civil society.

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[3] An NGO can become part of the CSO subset by taking on public policy concerns, or it could lose that status by dropping such interests. It may be noted here that political parties are excluded from our definition of CSO; the rationale is that parties have as their principal objective to *take over* the state, as opposed to CSOs, which only want to *influence* the state. For more on the definition of civil society and CSOs, see Blair et al. (1994: 4-10).

Principal theme of the study

El Salvador's major interest to the CDIE civil society assessment is that it offers an opportunity to analyze the role of civil society and donor-assisted CSOs in facilitating reconciliation and reconstruction of a country after a prolonged and bitter civil war. The war between the Government of El Salvador (GOES) and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) lasted from 1980 until the peace accords signed at Chapultepec at the beginning of 1992. During this 12-year conflict, some 80,000 Salvadorans are estimated to have died, and in large areas of the countryside, buildings were reduced to rubble, forcing populations to flee.

How to rebuild the physical infrastructure and – much more importantly – how to reweave the social structure are the critical problems facing the country today. In the case of the social structure, the challenge must be faced at two levels. First, the opposing leaderships must be brought back together, a task which is essentially a matter of dealing with elites in the capital city. And secondly, the former combatants, their families and their sympathizers must be returned to the national fold, a challenge that is largely rural, inasmuch as the countryside was where the war was fought out. The first problem concerns several hundred people, while the second involves many tens of thousands. There are of course many other sectors in which civil society is active, as for instance human rights and the environment, and the CDIE team did devote some attention to these domains. But we concentrated our principal effort to the business of reconciliation, for it is here that the El Salvador experience is richest in lessons to draw.

One cautionary note should be entered at this point to the effect that, as with similar evaluations undertaken by the Program and Operations Assessment Division of CDIE in other areas, this study does not constitute a review or evaluation of particular projects or programs implemented by the USAID mission in El Salvador. Rather it is intended to review the overall experience of USAID as well as other donors in supporting civil society over the last several years. It should be added that this support may well not have been intended as such at the time. For example, USAID assistance to the MEA program in the 1980s was probably aimed much more at reconstructing wartorn small town infrastructure than as a program to promote local democracy, but it did have some democracy-building aspects to it and certainly has had some long-term impact in that direction, so we have included it in our analysis. In sum, it is important to emphasize that this report is not intended in any way to "grade" donor performance, but instead is designed to assess what donor support for civil society organizations has led to over time with respect to strengthening democratic governance.

Methodology and team composition

The centerpiece of this CDIE assessment was a three-week field visit to El Salvador during July-August 1994. The methodology pursued consisted largely of four distinct elements:

- **key informant interviews** in San Salvador (as well as several in Washington before and after our trip to El Salvador), totalling about 60 altogether (see Annex 3);
- **document review** of material produced by USAID as well as many of the NGOs and GOES entities visited (the most salient such material is noted in the references to this report attached as Annex 1);
- **field visits** to the countryside in order to obtain first-hand impressions of the reconciliation initiative in the former conflictive areas (we visited some eleven localities in Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Morazán departments – all in "ex-conflictive zones" – as well as two habitations in Santa Ana department, which was not much affected by the war);
- **statistical analysis** of opinion surveys that had been conducted for other purposes in 1991 and 1994, but which contained data relevant to our study.

The CDIE team members (all political scientists and all contributors to the report draft itself) were:

- Dr Harry Blair (at the time with CDIE but since returned to his position as a political science professor at Bucknell University), who served as team leader for the El Salvador study (as well as a previous civil society assessment of Bangladesh) and as the initial assessment manager for CDIE's civil society assessment; he is not a Latin American specialist but had served earlier as team leader for CDIE's Rule of Law field studies in Argentina, Colombia and Uruguay.
- Dr John Booth (professor of political science at the University of North Texas) has been specializing in Central American politics for two decades and has written widely in the field.
- Ricardo Córdova is director of the Fundación Guillermo Ungo, a think-tank foundation in San Salvador focusing on issues of democracy, as well as a doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh.
- Dr Mitchell Seligson (professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh) has also specialized in and written extensively about Central American politics for some two decades, as well as conducting earlier several studies for USAID in El Salvador relating to democratization.

What was omitted

As indicated above, the pre-eminent problems on which we concentrated in El Salvador were reconciliation of former combatants and a widening of political space to include elements previously excluded. With this principal focus, which necessitated a number of time-consuming field trips to the countryside, and given that we had only three week in-country, there was clearly a limit on the number of sectors we could analyze. We were able to

include some additional topics like human rights and environmental policy, but had to leave out others, such as civil society efforts that helped promote the peace accords of 1992 or the think tank sector.[4]

[4] Actually the most influential think tanks, like FUSADES and CENITEC are essentially appendages of the major political parties (in these two cases ARENA and the PDC) and so fall outside our definition of civil society, as given above in the text.

II. Historical Background and Context[5]

This chapter begins with a very brief overview of El Salvador's history. moving quickly to the development of civil society in the latter part of the twentieth century and the civil war of 1980-1991. The peace accords ending the war are assessed in some detail, inasmuch as the established much of the setting for post-war civil society. Part of the outcome of the accords was a temporary influx of foreign assistance to El Salvador, which is the final topic of the chapter.

The colonial period and after

The Spanish conquered and colonized El Salvador during the 16th century, decimating the indigenous populace and relegating its survivors to less desirable mountainous lands. The territory that is today El Salvador formed part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala, a bureaucratic subsidiary of the Spanish Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico), its present territory divided between the jurisdictions of Guatemala and León in Nicaragua. In 1821 Mexico won independence from Spain, and in 1823 El Salvador became one of United Provinces of Central America after the isthmus's former colonies rejected Mexico's efforts to annex them. The Central American federation was wracked by internal conflict among the provinces and between Liberal and Conservative forces, and eventually collapsed in 1838. El Salvador's Liberals and Conservatives struggled for dominance of the polity afterward, often suffering from heavy handed Guatemalan interference in choosing rulers. After 1871 the Liberals rose to ascendancy and promoted economic modernization and infrastructure development, free trade, and the aggressive expansion of export agriculture.[6]

The descendants of the conquerors became involved in export-oriented agricultural production, first cacao (produced mainly as tribute to the Spanish by indigenous peoples) and then the dye *añil* (indigo). Indigo production heavily utilized Indian labor organized not through tribute but through labor levies enforced by the military. Indigo boomed and waned several times from the 17th through the 19th century, eventually declining dramatically as an export after 1870 due to competition from European chemical dyes. The Liberal presidents promoted coffee as a substitute export. The state removed poor mestizo and Indian peasants from the volcanic mountain slopes ideal for coffee production, and by the late 19th century forced an increasingly landless rural population to work on coffee plantations. Peasants often violently resisted such land

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[5]History of El Salvador drawn from Booth and Walker (1993), Russell (1984), Pastor (1988), and Woodward (1976).

[6]The Liberal-Conservative clash in El Salvador eventually waned after the Liberals became ascendant and both groups embraced the same basic economic model.

seizures and labor policies. Liberal governments -- typically civilian -- used the armed forces to repress such dissidence, assure a captive supply of cheap rural labor, and abet the increased concentration of land ownership and the dramatic further expansion of coffee cultivation. The emergent coffee bourgeoisie soon consolidated its hold upon the economy and political system, ruling through increasingly repressive regimes.

Living conditions among the rural poor and the emergent urban working classes eroded badly in the early twentieth century. When the great depression of 1929 cut markets for coffee, the coffee elite reduced workers' wages, fueling popular demands for change. The reformist regime of Pío Romero Bosque (1927-1931) eased repression, allowed laborers, students, and reformers to organize, made concessions to labor, and raised popular hopes for social justice. When a free election was held in 1931 another reformer, Arturo Araujo, won the presidency. Laborers and peasants immediately mobilized to demand reforms, causing Araujo to be quickly overthrown by Gen. Maximiliano Hernández Martínez. A poorly coordinated peasant and worker uprising in January 1932, led by communist Agustín Farabundo Martí, was violently crushed by the security forces and large landowners. Martí and other leaders were captured and executed. In what became known as the *Matanza* (the Massacre), an estimated 30,000 Indian and *mestizo* peasants -- most not involved in the would-be rebellion -- were also slaughtered.

Among the effects of the *Matanza* were that most Indians (apparently believing that they had been targeted as victims by their Indian garb and ways) subsequently abandoned their traditional language and culture. A generation of rural Salvadorans was strongly discouraged from political participation and organization. Most importantly, however, a new division of labor emerged. Economic elites retreated from their former control of the state to concentrate on running the economy, while the military took control of politics. The military thus assumed political preeminence, taking over direct rule and retaining it for decades.

After General Martínez was deposed in 1944 in the wake of middle class pressure for democratization, the military restructured its form of rule. Critical to this process was the 1948 coup and the reformist military junta of 1948-1950. Under the junta an elected constituent assembly significantly reformed the constitution, and the military developed a system through which it would rule for the next 30 years by establishing the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification (PRUD). In 1961, after another wave of pressure for reforms from urban social forces, the armed forces replaced the PRUD with the Party of National Conciliation (PCN), which controlled the system until 1979. Despite the restructuring of its party in 1961, however, the system of military rule set up in the late 1940s remained intact. And despite the role of civil society in prompting the military's nominal reforms of 1948 and 1961, the armed forces -- with the support of the coffee and business bourgeoisies -- dominated politics and generally ruled with high levels of corruption and repression.

The 1960s and 1970s

In the 1960s El Salvador's membership in the Central American Common Market, with the assistance of the Alliance for Progress, stimulated an economic boom characterized by rapid industrial development and increased agricultural exports. GDP per capita grew at over 2 percent per year between 1962 and 1979. During the 1960s and early 1970s, workers' real wages rose steadily in El Salvador, but then declined sharply in the late 1970s, losing one fifth of their former purchasing power (Booth and Walker, 1993:91-2). At the same time, urban unemployment rates also rose steadily in the 1960s and 1970s, and changes in the rural economy increased landlessness and exacerbated agricultural unemployment even more sharply. Wealth and income (both always very unevenly distributed in El Salvador) became more tightly concentrated in the hands of the upper classes during the Common Market boom years.

During the mid-1960s, the combination of modernization by military governments and the social and economic changes driven by economic growth substantially expanded civil society. Salvadorans organized groups to represent and protect their political, economic, and social interests. Several opposition parties appeared, including the social democratic National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and the communist-linked Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN). The PDC grew rapidly under the leadership of José Napoleón Duarte and twice won control of the municipality of San Salvador. When the MNR and PDC joined forces behind Duarte's presidential candidacy in 1972 for the coalition National Opposition Union (UNO), the growing electoral popularity of the reformist slate threatened the military-bourgeoisie alliance's interests. When Duarte won the 1972 presidential balloting, the vote was overturned by the armed forces and Col. Arturo Armando Molina was installed in the presidency. After Molina, the military in 1977 installed Col. Carlos Humberto Romero in the presidency through yet another election fraud.

During the late 1970s, rapidly deteriorating real wages and working class living standards spawned growing political and economic unrest, leading to an explosive popular mobilization. Student organizations, labor and peasant unions, and a variety of opposition parties ranging from the Christian Democrats to the small Communist party increased their efforts to politicize the people to defend their interests. Leftist rebel groups appeared for the first time since 1932. (Booth and Walker, 1993:39).

A critical portion of this mobilization stemmed from the efforts of Roman Catholic clergy and laity to promote social change. Hundreds of Christian base communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base*, or CEBs) formed to work for social change. Thousands of lay catechists and "delegates of the Word" promoted awareness of economic and political injustice and grass-roots self-help activity, peasant organization, and other pressures for change.

The Molina and Romero regimes' response to this mobilization for change was repressive. ORDEN (*Organización Democrática*

Nacionalista), a rightist rural paramilitary force with ties to the security forces, appeared in the 1960s. At first ORDEN spied on and repressed those working to organize peasants. It later expanded its targets to include labor organizers and unions, university students, and members of middle-sector opposition organizations. Regular security forces became more openly repressive in the 1970s, targeting PDC peasant organizers, university students, labor leaders, lay catechists and even priests and nuns. By the late 1970s the rates of political murders by security forces and death squads operating within them rate skyrocketed, eventually exceeding 1,000 victims per month by the early 1980s (Booth and Walker 1993:95-98).

The civil war

On 15 October 1979 reformist elements of the armed forces, centrist parties, and the bourgeoisie overthrew Romero in hopes of implementing reforms that might forestall a Nicaraguan-style leftist revolutionary victory (the Sandinista government had taken power there in July 1979). The United States backed the new junta, restored U.S. economic and military assistance (which had earlier been suspended because of human rights violations) to the GOES, and pressed for human rights improvements and major social programs including a massive agrarian reform. Rightist elements quickly prevailed over moderates within the junta, however, and rather than diminishing, human rights violations rapidly escalated.

Their hopes for reform frustrated, the moderate left and much of the center abandoned the new regime and rallied together behind the growing rebel movement. Dozens of working and middle class organizations, whose members numbered in the hundreds of thousands, formed the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) in 1980. In the same year five Marxist guerrilla organizations merged into the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FMLN and FDR joined forces in late 1980 in a full military and civil challenge to the sovereignty of the regime. After some time, the FMLN had seized effective control of several Salvadoran departments.[7]

The contours of the ensuing eleven year civil war are well known. The Reagan administration intensified foreign assistance begun by the Carter administration in order to strengthen the regime militarily and organizationally. By the mid 1980s, U.S. aid and the efforts of the Salvadoran regime had:

- Improved the GOES's military capacity to the point of containing the FMLN militarily, leading to an eventual stalemate of the war;
- Replaced the de facto junta with a new constitution written by an elected assembly, and elected the PDC's Duarte president in March 1984; and
- Significantly reduced human rights abuses by security forces and death squads.

[7] The country is divided administratively into some 14 *departamentos*.

This effort involved the creation of a new, viable, and legitimate government for El Salvador. The United States expended about US$ 4.2 billion on the effort during the 1980-1991 civil war years, including funds disbursed for military and intelligence (roughly US$ 1.1 billion), and for economic, political, electoral, and diplomatic assistance (roughly US$ 3.1 billion) to the GOES.[8] The PDC government of Duarte, centrist and reform-oriented, became the principal vehicle for this effort in the mid 1980s. However, corruption and incompetence in the PDC government alienated many voters and former supporters, undermining the PDC's electoral appeal. Meanwhile, the rightist Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) party improved its organizational capacity and from its position of dominance within the Legislative Assembly for several years polished its image and program sufficiently to win the 1989 presidential election for Alfredo Cristiani.

Despite massive U.S. assistance for almost a decade, and despite its enormous resulting force and firepower advantage, the Salvadoran armed forces failed to defeat the FMLN, although the military eventually did curtail insurgent activity and largely contain it to certain departments. The army pounded insurgent-held areas mercilessly during the early and mid 1980s, demolishing infrastructure and driving most of the surviving civilian populace into internal or foreign refuge, especially in neighboring Honduras.

On the other side, the FMLN found itself significantly contained to certain (now largely) depopulated areas, except for its operations against infrastructure (bridges and power pylons) and military targets outside those areas. By the last third of the 1980s the war became, by and large, militarily stalemated. In the Honduran refugee camps there arose nuclei of organization that would eventually form NGOs to find and distribute economic relief for refugees and in the war zones. These NGOs also led the movement to repopulate rebel-held Morazán and Chalatenango and to promote the reconstruction of the region.

Under the Central American Peace Accords of August 1987, President Duarte's government agreed to enter into peace negotiations with the FMLN-FDR and to promote national reconciliation. The armed forces opposed these negotiations, so that President Duarte made relatively little progress. The civil sectors of the rebel movement, represented in the FDR, returned to El Salvador under the terms of the 1987 Central American Peace Accord. After evaluating the situation, FDR leaders took part in the 1989 election. The FMLN, in contrast, elected to continue fighting.

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[8] Data from USAID, "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Series of Yearly Data. Volume II, Latin American and the Caribbean: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, FY 1946-FY 1992" (Washington: USAID, FA/B/RPA, n.d.). Various sources list authorizations, obligations, expenditures, etc., over differing time periods, making it difficult to arrive at an overall figure.

In the 1989 election the conservative ARENA) party's Alfredo Cristiani won the presidency and a majority in the legislature. Early in Cristiani's administration the military stalemate dragged on at a high level of violence, and peace talks produced little. However, as 1989 unfolded, changes on various fronts helped break the military. and political deadlocks. First, the new Bush administration brought into office a more pragmatic view of the Salvadoran conflict, whereby the war's main financial backer became more amenable to a negotiated settlement in part because of the waning of the Cold War.

Secondly, on 11 November 1989, the FMLN, frustrated by a lack of progress in the peace talks, launched a massive offensive, especially in the capital, San Salvador. The Salvadoran Army contained the November-December uprising, but in the process murdered 6 Jesuits priests at the Central American University, thereby causing a severe reaction both domestically and internationally. The offensive and the reaction to the Jesuit murders helped break the stalemate by making the GOES and military more receptive to peace talks. The talks continued and eventually resulted in the peace accords of January 1992.

The development of Salvadoran civil society[9]

Organized interests have played an important role in El Salvador's political development at several critical junctures since the early 1970s. Powerful economic interests organized around the country's major productive forces in agriculture (and after 1960 in industry) have dominated the political system or governed in alliance with the armed forces. Socioeconomic change has produced middle class, labor, and peasant groups that have clashed periodically with the alliance between powerful economic forces and the military. These middle and working class forces have repeatedly been both the harbinger and principal victim of intense political repression.

For example, in the 1870s violent peasant resistance to the loss of their communal lands led the government to form a rural police force and a standing army to suppress the rebels and ensure a docile agricultural labor supply. During the Romero Bosque and Araujo administrations (1927-1931), modest reforms and expanded political space permitted the mobilization of peasant, labor, and intellectual groups. These groups pressed for greater democracy and for further economic reforms to ameliorate growing working class poverty, but were crushed by the Hernández Martínez coup and the great massacre of 1932. The prodemocracy movement of 1944-1945, which helped oust Hernández Martínez, was largely urban and initially middle class in origin, beginning with a strike by students at the National University. Later labor unions and a reformist party coalition joined the agitation for democracy. Once again the armed forces truncated the prodemocracy movement with a

[9]This section drawn mainly from Russell (1984: Chapter 3-4), Dunkerley (1982), Baloyra (1982), and Montgomery (1982).

coup and increased repression, and later formed the military-dominated PRUD that ruled until 1961.

In the 1950s PRUD presidents moderated repression and restored some of the political space for civil society. The Cuban revolution in 1959 spawned demands for economic reform and democratization in El Salvador -- once again led by university students. This unrest provoked the ouster of President José María Lemus in a 1960 coup, followed by a short-lived reformist military-civilian junta. More conservative military elements then quickly overthrew the junta in January 1961, violently suppressed protests, and replaced the PRUD with the military-dominated PCN that ruled until 1979.

Civil Society and the onset of war

Under PCN rule in the 1960s and early 1970s, a similar cycle of the expansion of demands for political change leading to repression repeated itself with terrible consequences. Industrialization and economic modernization under the Central American Common Market led to a corresponding expansion and diversification of civil society. Middle class forces were allowed some freedom to organize during the 1960s, the universities remained fairly free, and the PDC was allowed to develop as a legal opponent of the regime. The PDC won an increasing share of legislative seats and municipal governments in the 1960s, including San Salvador (1964 to 1972). However as the 1970s began repression of urban and middle sector groups rose.

Rural labor organization and "communists" were repressed perhaps even more harshly, and "dissident labor leaders were repeatedly tortured and murdered and dozens of critics were exiled" (Russell, 1984:44). Despite such GOES efforts to contain working class and leftist elements, during the late 1960s and early 1970s the myriad socioeconomic pressures in Salvadoran society worked further to expand popular sector organization and demands. Economic problems included rapidly increasing income inequality, increasing unemployment despite industrialization, declining coffee and cotton prices, and the return of Salvadoran refugees and the loss of markets following the 1969 war with Honduras.

As civil society grew increasingly restive, the PCN governments employed ever more repression in order to maintain control. During unrest following the 1972 election fraud, UNO presidential candidate Duarte himself was arrested and tortured by the military. After their release, Duarte and his running mate Guillermo Ungo were forced into exile. Civil society's struggle with the regime intensified throughout the 1970s:

> During the Molina administration, a trend began which accelerated in the late 1970s. Trade union and peasant groups began to proliferate, and religious, university, and professional groups began to back their claims to a better life. The government, the oligarchy, and the military, frightened by the peasants' growing power, began to repress them with increased brutality. To defend

> themselves against this repression, peasants began to arm themselves. Later, guerrilla groups formed and began to protect peasants and workers against attack and to retaliate against government security and paramilitary forces. (Russell, 1984:48)

Repression became increasingly violent, and the regime in 1977 passed a new public order law that banned demonstrations, public meetings, and most dissenting political information -- intended to quash activity by unions, peasant groups, reformist clergy, political opponents, and human rights monitors.

By the late 1970s, therefore, key sectors of Salvadoran civil society had become politicized and polarized. While many civil society organizations remained politically neutral or nominally so, many others had aligned themselves in support of or opposed to economic and political change.

One set of organizations of particular interest here represented the interests of working class Salvadorans. Between 1967 and 1979, many of such groups -- especially peasant organizations, CEBs, and unions -- had begun to form links with leftist guerrilla organizations through several confederations of "popular organizations."[10] Through such organizations, dozens of groups and hundreds of thousands of citizens were eventually mobilized from demanding limited reforms or particularistic benefits into expressing broader opposition to the Molina and Romero regimes and to the 15 October 1979 junta. Eventually many of these groups came to embrace and struggle for revolutionary change. Such organizations in late 1980 coalesced with part of the PDC and the social democratic National Revolutionary Movement to form the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). The FDR very soon afterward allied itself with the recently forged Marxist guerrilla coalition, the FMLN.

The Salvadoran government also promoted and mobilized organizations as a counterforce to opposition civil society. One such organization was the Salvadoran Communal Union (*Unión Comunal Salvadoreña* -- UCS), first established in the mid 1960s, which expanded to an estimated 120,000 members by 1980.[11] The UCS consisted of community groups of smallholder peasants -- self-help organizations -- intended to help improve the life of small

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[10]Montgomery (1982: 123-124) notes the following dates for the formation of these leftist federations; dates of formation and the guerrilla organization with which it was linked follow each in parentheses: *Unión Democrática Nacionalista* -- UDN (1967, Communist Party of El Salvador -- PCS); *Frente de Acción Popular Unificada* -- FAPU (1974, *Resistencia Nacional* -- RN); *Bloque Popular Revolucionario* -- BPR (1975, *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* -- FPL); *Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero* -- LP-28 (1978, *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo/Partido de la Revolución Salvadoreña* -- PRS); and *Movimiento de Liberación Popular* -- MLP (1979, *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos* -- PRTC).

[11]The UCS received support from the Catholic Church, and from USAID and the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) (Montgomery 1982:123; McClintock 1985:156).

landholders and thus to counterbalance burgeoning reform pressures from the landless peasantry.

Another, more overtly political (and ultimately paramilitary) force was ORDEN, formed originally in the early 1960s by the Salvadoran National Guard's intelligence service. ORDEN members -- eventually numbering perhaps 100,000 -- were recruited from veterans of military service, given anti-Communist indoctrination, and organized to perform intelligence, civic action, and paramilitary functions for the security forces. ORDEN eventually became deeply involved in the repression of opposition civil society. Abolished by decree of the 15 October 1979 junta, ORDEN mutated in the early 1980s into the so-called Civil Defense units. The Civil Defense units operated with the military during the war in the 1980s, and reportedly also gave rise to rightist death squads.[12]

In sum, organized interests expanded rapidly in El Salvador during the 1960s and 1970s, driven by the socioeconomic changes unleashed by the Common Market economic growth boom and agroexport policies of the era. Some groups apparently maintained a posture of apolitical neutrality vis-a-vis pressures for or against change, but polarization of civil society became intense. Many groups advocating change, victimized by regime repression, eventually made common cause through the broad opposition coalition FDR and joined forces with Marxist revolutionary coalition FMLN. While such organizations worked for revolutionary change, others militated against it. The PCN governments of the 1960s and 1970s mobilized and employed the UCS as a counterweight to the organization of landless peasants, and developed ORDEN as an intelligence, paramilitary, and counterterror force.

Civil society during the civil war

When the revolutionary insurrection began in full in 1980 and the war against it was fully joined by the armed forces, much of the war's violence was intended to repress political participation and civil society in general. Human rights abuses reached horrific proportions. Estimates of 75,000 to 80,000 deaths during the civil war -- a large proportion of them among noncombatants -- represent only a fraction of the damage wreaked in the effort to discourage political activity.[13] Both sides abused human rights and repressed

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[12] McClintock (1985:205-209, 317-318); *Comisión Para la Verdad* (1993: 178); *La Prensa Gráfica* (1994a: 4-A).

[13]The staggering destruction of property and infrastructure, indeed of whole communities in extensive areas of the country, constitute other measures of the damage done in pursuit of victory. Another may be seen in estimates of 500,000 external refugees and perhaps a million persons displaced within El Salvador by the conflict.

or attacked their perceived opponents and perceived enemy sympathizers.[14]

According to the Truth Commission, the FMLN

> considered it legitimate to physically eliminate persons affiliated with military targets, traitors, "ears" (informants), and even political opponents. The assassinations of mayors, of rightist intellectuals, of public functionaries, and of judges are examples of this point of view. (*Comisión de la Verdad* 1993: 199)

Violence by GOES security forces and their collaborators sprang from

> a political conception that had made synonymous the concepts of political opponent, subversive, and enemy. Persons who expressed ideas contrary to official [ideas] ran the risk of being eliminated.... All organizations capable of promoting opposition ideas that might question official policies were assimilated by conditioned reflex into the ranks of the guerrillas. To belong to such an organization was the equivalent of being labeled a subversive. (*Comisión de la Verdad* 1993: 198)

The Truth Commission (1993:198) estimated that fully half of all the human rights abuses of the war occurred in 1980-1981, and that another fourth came during 1982-1983. Violence was most prevalent and indiscriminate in rural areas (where an estimated 95 percent of the deaths, disappearances, and damage occurred).

Several factors contributed to the gradual diminution of such violence and repression. During the mid-1980s there were (1) heavy external pressures on the part of the United States and other external actors, and (2) internal pressures (especially from the Catholic Church) upon the armed forces and government to moderate the violence of the security forces. Moreover, (3) the peace initiatives of the late 1980s and (4) the gradual democratization of the regime through constitutional reform and elections both also contributed to the reduction of violence.

As repression and human rights abuses abated in the late 1980s, and especially with the peace negotiations in 1989-1991, certain political space once again became available to certain segments of civil society. Some of the FDR's political organizations returned to the legal civil arena in 1987, and in 1989 the left's Democratic Convergence (CD) contested that year's elections. During this period external donors, especially foreign NGOs, began to support new Salvadoran NGOs or to work with existing relief and service

[14]The Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad 1993:198) reported that 5% of the human rights abuses it investigated were committed by the FMLN, with the balance committed by the armed forces, police, and rightist death squads.

organizations in guerrilla-dominated departments like Morazán, Chalatenango, and Usulután.

With the signing of the peace accord in early 1992, international donors, Salvadoran government agencies, and the FMLN and its affiliated organizations also began to encourage the formation of organizations -- hundreds and perhaps thousands of them -- to provide services and training, to channel relief and development assistance, to pursue policy goals and to fill organizational vacuums left by the war. All such efforts were massively encouraged by an unprecedented influx of external funding and a GOES and USAID ethos that favored government decentralization and the use of ARENA- and private sector-connected NGOs over government agencies to deliver services.[15]

Recent evolution of civil society

The universe of NGOs in El Salvador is a rich one, as is evidenced in the typology to be found in Annex 2 to this report. The United Nations Development Programme in 1992 examined the evolution of civil society in El Salvador by studying a group of 186 private development institutions (UNDP 1992). While the data collected on these organizations come from only a portion of the huge array of NGOs functioning in El Salvador, the focus upon development activities[16] is particularly helpful for our ends.

Of particular interest are data on the age of NGOs, which reveal the rate of growth of development-focused organizations over the last several decades. Table 1 presents the number of the development groups surveyed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1992) that formed during each of the five-year intervals since 1945, plus the three year period 1990-1992.[17]

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[15]Not all international donors have favored the decentralization/privatization strategy preferred by the United States. The European Community's programs, in contrast, may be fairly described as focusing upon implementing programs by working with and seeking to strengthen GOES ministries and agencies.

[16]Loosely defined as working with persons affected by the war, micro and small businesses, institutional development, handicapped persons, women, children, the poor, local development agencies, workers, the elderly, art and culture, credit, consumer defense, ecology, education, health, and housing.

[17] The table is based on information collected by the UNDP in 1992 from major NGOs in existence at that time. The UNDP survey excluded governmental and multinational organizations, groups affiliated with political parties, professional, religious and cooperative associations, as well as communal organizations (UNDP 1992: 1). Thus it leaves out many of the NGOs that the CDIE team would consider CSOs. The report also distorts somewhat the history presented in Table 1, in that NGOs that began in earlier years but then disappeared would not have been extant at the time of the UNDP survey and thus would not have been included in the Table. Still, the data presented in the Table should give a general idea of the historical pattern of NGO formation in El Salvador.

[Table 1 about here]

One notices in Table 1 a first upsurge of group formations during the early 1960s, the period that corresponds to the early Central American Common Market years. After contracting somewhat in the late 1960s, group formation begins a steep acceleration during the late 1970s and climbs into the early 1980s. This corresponds to the period in which anecdotal evidence has reported massive mobilization and polarization of Salvadoran civil society building up to the civil war. The final period (1985-92) is one in which a there occurs a veritable boom in organizations that provide services and promote development. This, of course, was set off by the peace negotiations, peace accord, and by growing flows of external aid. We conjecture that NGOs have formed at an even greater rate in El Salvador since the peace accord of 1992, given the massive supply of resources available to them for support, training and service programs since 1992.

We unfortunately lack data, other than those on the growth of the number of NGOs just cited, with which to measure the evolution of political participation by Salvadorans as individuals or as group members. However, in 1991 a survey of urban Central Americans was conducted[18] that provides a baseline of data on individual political participation in a variety of modes, including organizational activity levels in a variety of contexts (unions, cooperatives, civic organizations, professional associations, school-related groups, and community organizations). This permits us at least a snapshot of Salvadorans' civil-society participation levels at the end of the civil war, as shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Interestingly we note in Table 2 that Salvadorans were, overall, among the least politically and organizationally active of Central Americans in 1991. Urban Salvadorans reported the lowest levels of activity unions, cooperatives, and civic associations, and second lowest in professional associations. In contrast, the same Salvadorans reported a level of community problem solving activity (indicated in the last three rows of Table 2) that fell in the middle range for the region.

[Table 2 about here]

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[18] Support for the collection of these data came from the North-South Center of the University of Miami, the Howard Heinz Endowment-Center for Latin American Studies of the University of Pittsburgh Research Grants on Current Latin American Issues, University of North Texas Faculty Development Grants and Faculty Research programs, the Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos de El Salvador, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Tinker Foundation, the Heinz Foundation, and the University of Pittsburgh. The project was designed and much of the data was collected by a group including Booth, Córdova and Seligson of the present CDIE team. For two examples of work emerging from this effort, see Seligson (1993), and Booth and Richard (1994).

Another benchmark for El Salvador may be found in the commitment of its citizens to democratic norms. One of our arguments here is that civil society, participation through organizations, contributes positively to democracy. How committed are Salvadorans to democratic liberties? The same survey compared Central Americans on four distinct dimensions of civil liberties support (and an overall measure of commitment to democratic liberties). The results are seen in Table 3. There we note that, overall, Salvadorans in 1991 manifested very low commitment to civil liberties in comparison to other Central Americans. Salvadorans were most similar to citizens of Guatemala, another very violently repressive regime, in their low commitment to democratic norms.

[Table 3 about here]

It should be noted that, for the most part, Central Americans favor democratic liberties, except for acts that approach and include civil disobedience (fourth row of Table 3). Interestingly, the range of variation in democratic norms support across the countries of Central America, by and large, seems less than the range of variation in levels of actual citizen participation (as shown in Table 2).[19] To the extent that state repression can be assigned as a causal factor here, this difference in ranges between the two tables suggests that state repression influences participation (Table 2) more than support for democracy (Table 3). In sum, there is some reason to believe that regime repression affects both participatory practice and democratic attitudes, but that it impacts the former considerably more strongly.

Still, repression does appear to play a major role in reducing citizens' commitment to democratic liberties. Further evidence for this proposition emerges from a comparative study of the region by Booth and Richard (1994), which used the same 1991 database. They reported that the most important correlate of individual citizens' support for democratic norms in Central America was a structural (national) level measure of repression. Estimating the effect of past experience of repression in each of the Central American nations as well as its level at the time of the survey (1991), they found that higher levels of repression correlated strongly with lower citizen support for democratic norms and lower levels of political participation, and concluded that repression reduces democratic culture and participation. To the extent that this is the case, one hopes that the reverse would also be true: that a sharp reduction in state repression would lead to an increase in both democratic culture and democratic participation.

[19] The comparison here is a crude one, in that participation is measured in percent of respondents doing something while democratic norm support is gauged on a 1-to-10 scale for each respondent. Even so, the differences in range in the two tables invite the kind of comparison made here in the text.

One must ask what this might mean for contemporary El Salvador, given the apparent rapid recent improvement in the human rights climate and rapid recent expansion of NGO activity consequent upon implementation of the 1992 peace accords. We speculate that the reduction of political repression is likely already to have caused a significant expansion of participation in organizations in El Salvador, and probably also some increase in Salvadorans' commitment to democratic liberties.

In short, such changes through the expansion of civil society would constitute a marked increase in El Salvador's actual level of democracy. The increased participation and strengthened citizen commitment to democracy could also make the regime's democracy itself more robust by increasing citizen input to public policy making and by constraining elites to accept participation by civil society as a normal given within the polity. Such changes would be a vast improvement over El Salvador's sanguinary tradition of military and powerful economic elites periodically lashing out with violence to crush citizen participation.

The peace accords of 1992

The circumstances of the peace accords signed at the Chapultepec Palace in Mexico City on 16 January 1992 were of critical importance in determining how the Salvadoran polity emerged from the war. Indeed, it can be argued that these circumstances were what opened the possibility for civil society to contribute significantly to Salvadoran democracy. As we have seen, previous attempts to spread political participation beyond an elite circle constituted part of a cycle of expansion-repression-acquiescence. However, the ending of the 1980-1991 civil war promised to break that cycle by offering a genuine political opening to a wider range of citizens. Accordingly, the peace process deserves some brief analysis in this report.

The end of the Cold War at the turn of the decade into the 1990s played a role in inducing the GOES and FMLN to peace, in that external support from the two superpowers had lost much of its logic. But a much larger factor lay in the 1989 FMLN offensive and its consequences for both sides, for it made clear the reality that neither side could win a protracted conflict and that the only feasible solution lay in negotiation.

<u>The 1989 FMLN offensive and its consequences</u>

On 11 November 1989 the FMLN launched its greatest offensive of the entire war with attacks on military targets in several cities, especially San Salvador, where the FMLN established positions in several working class barrios. The army's counteroffensive of 14 November employed massive and indiscriminate bombings of the civil

population.[20] On November 20 and 21, the FMLN moved into Colonia Escalón, a neighborhood full of diplomats and wealthy citizens.[21]

In the offensive casualties among both government and guerrilla troops totalled over 4,000, with direct and indirect damages estimated at 597 million colones (FUSADES, 1989:5). Montoya and Martínez (1990:35) said that "the economic costs of only 12 days of war equalled in real terms 8.25% of the total costs over nine years of conflict."

There were three principal effects of the November 1989 battle of San Salvador:

- The FMLN was shown to be neither weak nor near annihilation, as Salvadoran and US military analysts had believed (CUDI 1990; LeoGrande 1990). Nevertheless, the guerrillas neither took power nor provoked a mass insurrection. Instead, it had now become clear to all that neither side could win, that in the words of one analyst, "The only alternative to a negotiated compromise was a perpetual bloody stalemate" (Leogrande 1990: 339).

- The assassination of the Jesuits on 16 November 1989 implicated the armed forces in yet another gross human rights violation and once again aroused much concern in the United States. A Congressional investigation suggested a military cover-up, again embarrassing the GOES. The prospect of withholding military assistance again arose.

- For the first time U.S. officials began to speak of the impossibility of winning the war and in favor of negotiation.[22]

Over the next 22 months GOES and government negotiators labored to end the war. The negotiations progressed through a series of key accords,[23] each of which resolved a critical sticking point in the negotiations, permitting advances toward the global solution to the conflict (Córdova 1993).

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[20]On human rights violations by both sides, see Americas Watch (1989).

[21]Details of the insurrection may be followed in New York Times (1989a-1989g).

[22]For example, Gen. Maxwell Thurman, chief of the U.S. Southern Command, told the U.S. Congress that the Salvadoran government was incapable of defeating the rebels and that the only way to end the war would be through negotiations (New York Times 1990).

[23]For the texts of the different accords throughout the negotiation process, see United Nations (1992).

The peace accords

On 16 January 1992 the government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front signed the historic peace accord ending twelve years of civil war.

The negotiations produced no single winner -- over 12 years neither the GOES nor the Frente was able to defeat its opponent on the battlefield, and neither won a clear victory for its political project at the negotiating table. Each side had to make concessions and won only part of what it sought. Both sides had to move away from initial positions, making concessions, in order to reach agreement.

The settlement as such included a complex of accords on political, military, and socioeconomic matters aimed at stopping violent conflict, ending human rights abuses, and promoting national reconciliation. Major provisions in the accords included the following:

- major reductions in the size of the army (which eventually reached about 50 percent in terms of personnel);
- establishment of a Truth Commission (3 members to be named by the U.N. Secretary General) that would investigate violence by both sides since 1980;
- land to be made available to ex-combatants from both sides, as well as training to re-integrate them into the civilian economy;
- abolition of the National Police (as well as several other GOES security agencies like the National Intelligence Directorate, National Guard and Treasury Police) and its replacement by a new National Civil Police; and
- creation of a United Nations agency (ONUSAL) to monitor the implementation of the accords.

International donor support for the peace accords

Consequent upon the signing of the peace accords in January 1992, members of the international donor community met in Washington to pledge support for the peace process. Later meetings along similar lines were held in Paris in the spring of 1993 and 1994. According to data gathered by the UNDP at the beginning of 1994, altogether the donors have collectively pledged some US$ 3.2 billion in technical and financial assistance over the four-year period 1992-1995.

A breakdown by donor is shown in Table 4, where it will be observed that the United States and the Inter-American Development Bank are the two largest contributors. It should be pointed out, however, that two other bilateral donors – Germany and Japan – have pledged major support, while some 14 others have promised amounts varying between US$ 14,000 (Chile) and US$ 34.7 million (Italy). Canada is second among this group, with US$ 29.5 million. Among the multilaterals, in addition to those listed specifically in Table 4, some

14 others have pledged amounts ranging between US$ 155,000 (UNIFEM) and US$ 46.7 million (the World Food Programme).

[Table 4 about here]

In addition to the total sums promised by the various donors, the time trends of the pledges are also of considerable interest, as illustrated in Figure 1. There are two patterns to be observed here. First, the overall levels are dropping from around US$ 400 million in 1992 to less than US$ 300 million in 1995.[24] But secondly, the decline is more gradual than might otherwise have been the case, because the relative burdens shift across different donors during the four-year period. USAID came in more strongly at first, and then as its assistance began to diminish in the later years, the multilateral donors have pledged larger amounts. This was largely because USAID was able to redirect other moneys (some of which were already in the aid pipeline for El Salvador) into efforts to support the peace accords,[25] while other donors needed some lead time to shape their assistance strategies toward greater contributions to El Salvador.

[Figure 1 about here]

One vitally important aspect of the patterns in Figure 1 does not appear on the chart, and that is what everyone expects to happen after 1995: a very drastic fall-off in international assistance to El Salvador. Virtually all those interviewed by the CDIE team said they anticipated that after 1995 there would be a precipitous drop in foreign aid money coming in, though none could predict just how sharp the fall would be. The reasons for such a view are obvious. International donors generally face a combination of declining (or at best steady) resources available for their programs and increasing demands upon them as countries like South Africa and the former Soviet states become major foreign aid recipients. For the United States, these themes are even more stark, as new claimants on foreign assistance like Haiti continue to emerge. The upshot is that official foreign assistance to El Salvador faces a very serious drop in the near-term future.

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[24] Figure 1 somewhat distorts the actual pattern, inasmuch as only about two-fifths of the total US$ 3.2 billion was broken down by year in the UNDP report (the remaining three-fifths was reported only in terms of total project cost over the four-year period). Even so, the pattern shown in Figure 1 appears to be representative of the overall donor trend across the entire period, from what the CDIE team was able to glean from USAID and other donor representatives interviewed.

[25] A good deal of the USAID portfolio was already directed toward endeavors that became key elements in the reconciliation effort, such as the Municipalities in Action (MEA) program, which will be covered in some detail in this report.

III. Reconstruction and Reconciliation at the Local Level[26]

War is fought by soldiers and sailors, but peace is negotiated by diplomats, generals and presidents. This is true for international wars as well as civil wars, but the latter differ in at least one fundamental respect from international wars. In an international war, once the peace has been achieved, via negotiation or surrender, soldiers, sailors and civilian populations on all sides accept the outcome and return to their normal lives. In civil wars, however, while the peace is also negotiated and signed by leaders, the maintenance of the peace depends to a very large degree on the acceptance of the terms of the peace by the civilian population. Civil wars by definition involve a far wider cast of characters than armies and soldiers alone, since they spring directly from the discontents of civil society. It is not surprising, therefore, that civil society, ultimately, must accept the terms of peace agreements that bring to an end a shooting war. If those terms are not accepted, or if initially acceptable terms are not fulfilled as the peace is being stitched together, then the threat of renewed conflict cannot be far away. Contemporary examples of difficulties in settling protracted civil struggles include the conflicts in Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sri Lanka.

The conflict in El Salvador has rapidly faded from the headlines and the memories of the U.S. population. Even during the height of the war, it did not captivate the attention of the U.S. public. Notwithstanding this absence of attention, it is important not to underestimate the magnitude of the Salvadoran conflict. The civil war that wracked El Salvador from 1980 to 1992 was labeled by the U.S. military as a "low-intensity conflict," and so it might appear to disinterested observers that the war produced low-intensity suffering. Nothing could be further from the truth. The war was, in fact, of very high intensity for the 80,000 soldiers, guerrillas and civilians who died in it. It was also of high intensity to the far larger number of grieving relatives and friends who survived.[27]

Both those who fought and those who did not were affected by the Civil War. Now that the war is over, it will take far more than signatures on the pages of the peace treaties to overcome the hostilities engendered by the conflict. The War arose out of a set of deeply held grievances, reviewed earlier of this report, which

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[26]Some of the findings that appear in this chapter are based upon Seligson's several prior research trips to El Salvador.

[27] This level of killing, projected on the U.S. population, would have equated to 3.75 million deaths in World War II, whereas actually all of the war, the U.S. suffered less than one-tenth that number of military deaths. For El Salvador, then, the civil war of the 1980s was a very high intensity conflict indeed.

did not disappear with the stroke of a pen in the Chapultepec peace agreements. This war, like all others, was settled by negotiations from above, but the winning of a lasting peace will require reconciliation of conflicts from below. If peace is to be lasting, citizens must reconstruct their homes, their jobs, and their lives, and do so in a fashion that will help lead to long term stability in El Salvador rather than to exacerbate the very conflicts that served as the motivation for the war in the first place.

In this section of this report, we examine the efforts at reconstruction and reconciliation from below. Although the subject is a large one, our interest is narrow. We have no interest in presenting a "laundry list" of each of the post-war programs, their goals and their record of achievement. We leave that task to program evaluations. Rather, we hope to determine in what ways efforts at reconstruction and reconciliation at the local level have been contributing either to building of a stronger, more consensual civil society in El Salvador, or to reinforcing old conflicts. To do this we first need to consider the major challenges that confront the peace process at that level. We will then examine the centerpiece of the reconstruction efforts at the local level, the Municipalities in Action (MEA) program as a key mechanism by which civil society is being rebuilt. We finally turn our attention to the problems we see in this process.

Challenges at the Local Level

Reconstruction and reconciliation in El Salvador face numerous challenges. In this section we briefly enumerate some of those that appear most likely to be problems that will be encountered elsewhere in similar situations of recovery from civil wars.

<u>The Land Issue</u>

The civil war that began in El Salvador in the late 1970s has appeared to many observers to be a textbook case of agrarian insurrection (Durham, 1979; North, 1981; Midlarsky and Roberts 1985; Williams 1986; Paige, 1987; Brockett, 1988; Paige 1993). It is true that some studies of the war have emphasized a variety of other factors that help explain the magnitude and course of the insurrection, such as the role of external actors, especially Nicaragua, Cuba and the United States (Schwarz, 1991), the particular characteristics of the Salvadoran military (Baloyra 1982;), and the interests and composition of the coffee elite (Paige 1993). But not even the Kissinger Commission, which stressed the importance of communist infiltration in accounting for instability in Central America, denied the importance of the land issue as a major underlying cause of the war (NBP 1984).

Central to the view that agrarian inequality is associated with the outbreak of the civil war in El Salvador, is the frequently cited statistic that the landless population as a proportion of the total national population was among the highest of any country in Latin America (Prosterman and Riedinger, 1987: 143). In addition, El

Salvador's tiny size and large rural population, coupled with a concentration of land in the hands of large coffee and cotton growers, had resulted in tiny plots for those peasants who did have some land. Even among the landholding peasants, however, large numbers were not owners but instead worked the land as tenants. All studies take note of the high population density, greater than that of India, extreme concentration in the distribution of land, (a Gini coefficient of .83, among the five highest in the world)[28] and associate those conditions with the outbreak of the war. In short, landless, land-poor, and tenant populations predominated in the rural landscape in El Salvador and provided the conditions under which insurrection prospered.

If defects in the agrarian structure were central to the causes of the Salvadoran civil war, the long-term stability of the peace ought to depend to a significant degree on the amelioration of those defects. At the outset of the Civil War, the GOES with strong U.S. backing implemented an extensive land reform scheme that was designed to stem the flow of peasants into the guerrilla armies. The program was the centerpiece of the counterinsurgency strategy (Schwarz, 1991). Phase I of the 1980 reform ordered the expropriation of all farms over 500 hectares, resulting in the seizing of 472 farms. Phase II of the reform, originally extending the process to farms in the 100-500 hectare range, was restricted to the 245-500 hectare range by the 1983 Constitution. During the 1980s, much of the land in this range was either sold to the government or subdivided and sold to private individuals. Phase III of the reform, the so-called land-to-the-tiller program, granted land to some 50,000 former renters and sharecroppers.

The net effect of these reforms was to eliminate all large land holdings in the country and to create a large sector of beneficiaries, many of them organized in cooperatives. Some 85,000 families received land under the reform, representing about 10 percent of Salvador's current population, assuming 6 people per rural family. In terms of the economically active population, this represents approximately 125,000 workers, or 21 percent of the economically active population in agriculture. The land area granted to peasants was extensive by any measure, totaling 289,000 hectares, representing roughly 14 percent of the nation's total land area, or one-fifth of the farm land (Thiesenhusen, 1993). By contrast, in Bolivia, which underwent one of Latin America's most extensive land reforms, 10 per cent of the agricultural labor force and 13 percent of the land in farms were involved in the reform (García, 1970: 314).

Given the magnitude of the land reform, one would have hoped that it would have entirely or largely eliminated the problem of landlessness in El Salvador. Unfortunately, it fell far short of that goal. In one recent study, it was estimated that by the end

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[28]According to the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators (Taylor and Jodice 1983:140-41)*, the highest land Gini for the 1970s was Venezuela, at 90.9.

of the War, there remained 295,000 landless and land-poor farmers, or 51 per cent of the economically active population in agriculture (Seligson, et. al., forthcoming). It is not surprising, therefore, that the FMLN negotiators of the peace treaties attempted to expand the land reforms further. They were partially successful, since the peace accords provide for the transfer of land to some 22,500 ex-combatants (guerrillas and soldiers alike)[29].

Another component of the peace accords attempts to deal with a far more complex problem, one that bears directly on the resurrection of local economies as well as the resolution of long-standing land disputes. This program involves the transfer of land to some 25,000 *tenedores* (literally, "holders"), the term used to refer to farmers in the war zones who either remained in those zones throughout the war or who moved into the zone as the conflict eased. Many of these *tenedores* were sympathizers of the FMLN. In almost all cases, however, they were not the original owners of the plots they became eligible to claim under the terms of the accords. The owners retain their rights to the land, but are also able to sell their land to the Land Bank, recently created to facilitate the transfer process and largely funded by USAID.[30]

Under the terms of the peace accords, owners cannot be forced to sell to the *tenedores*, but are encouraged to do so. In practice, few of the owners have been willing to sell. In part this reluctance stems from the hope on the part of the sellers that if they wait they will be able obtain a better price.[31] A second constraint in the land transfer process is that many of the sellers, caught up with the optimism that peace has brought, hope to return to their farms and begin cultivating them again. A third factor involves the limited administrative capacity of the Land Bank to establish a fair price for the land and to then negotiate the sale/purchase with all parties. Each property must be measured and assessed, but the number of qualified assessors working for the Land Bank is inadequate for the task. The combined impact of these three problems is that few land transfers have been completed, and buyers and sellers remain in limbo.[32]

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[29]If the peace accords are fully carried out, the landless and land-poor will be reduced by an additional 75,000 leaving about 175,000 in this category, plus an additional nearly 60,000 unemployed agricultural workers, for a total of about 235,000.

[30]The European Community is also supporting this effort, but only in the Department of Usulután, one of El Salvador's 14 departments.

[31] That fueled in part by the experience in the Department of Usulután, where the European Economic Community (EC) has taken responsibility for the land transfer program and has proven willing to pay significantly (up to a third) more than the USAID limit in buying land.

[32] The GAO found that as of mid-1993 fewer than 5700 recipients had actually acquired land, as against the 20,000 or so who should have done so by the terms of the peace accords (GAO 1994: 10).

Needless to say, the uncertainties produced by the slow land transfer process has been having a negative effect on the countryside. Tenedores are reluctant to invest in land improvements or even plant crops on land that they ultimately might be forced to return to the former owners. On the other hand, sources of agricultural credit are reluctant to give loans to farmers who might be forced off their land and therefore be unable to repay the loans. Crop production is therefore below what had been hoped for when the hostilities ended. A further difficulty is that the uncertainty of land ownership constrains farmers from building permanent housing on their farms.

Infrastructure Rebuilding

The effect of the war in El Salvador was very uneven. Although virtually no area of the country went untouched, in many areas the impact was limited to the destruction of a few electric poles. In other areas of the country, in contrast, fighting was far more intense. The Secretariat of National Reconstruction (SRN), the governmental body charged with the responsibility of planning and executing the reconstruction effort, has designated 115 of El Salvador's 262 municipalities as "ex-conflictive zones," in which significant war damage was experienced. Of those 115, a subset of perhaps 40 municipalities suffered extensive war damage, since these were the areas in which the guerrilla army held nearly complete control for most of the War. It was in these zones that the military employed a scorched earth policy, attempting to "deprive the fish of its water." The policy was to destroy completely all public and private structures so as to make these zones uninhabitable and by doing so prevent peasants sympathetic to the guerrillas from offering them food and shelter.

When the war was drawing to a close, the former residents of these areas, many of whom had lived in exile in Honduras or had moved to Salvadoran cities for protection, began moving back to these war zones. In many communities, all of the houses had been destroyed right down to the ground. In an even larger number of communities, the destruction centered on public facilities, including schools, churches, municipal buildings, health posts, telephone exchanges, and electric power sub-stations.

The task of reconstruction involves both private and public buildings. In the case of the former combatants, a housing program established as part of the peace accords financed the reconstruction of modest dwellings. In most cases this involves the purchase of corrugated roofing. Walls are made of adobe bricks baked in the sun. Costs, accordingly, are relatively minimal.[33] Public facilities are another matter. These buildings are far larger and more complex. Their reconstruction requires significant

[33] For the non-combatants, however, there is no such program (although some of the *tenedores* are being assisted with the land purchase enterprise discussed above in the text), and individuals are rebuilding their homes with their own meager resources.

external inputs in terms of architectural design, building materials, and skilled craftspersons.

Population Resettlement

Beginning in 1986, refugees from the war zones began the slow process of returning to their homes, a movement which accelerated as the war drew to a close in 1992. In many cases, however, when the refugees attempted to return to their former villages, they found them to be areas still hotly contested between the army and the guerrillas, and therefore they had to move into other villages that offered a higher degree of security. When the former residents of those more secure villages returned, they found their house plots and farms occupied by other refugees, so they in turn were forced to occupy the lands of others. By the time most of the refugees had returned, the situation had become chaotic in many places.

The confusion created by the pattern of returning refugees produced two major negative consequences. First, the cohesiveness of the former communities was lost and old patterns of community life and leadership were destroyed. Second, questions of local citizenship emerged as local governments would sometimes refuse to recognize the rights of these "newcomers." In effect, this allowed local mayors to selectively exclude individuals not politically acceptable to them, using formalistic and, as far as we can tell, illegal criteria. The municipal code requires only that citizens voting in popular referenda (*consultas populares*, to be discussed below) must be residents of the municipality. No prior residence requirement has been established.

Restoration of Public Officials and Employees

When the war broke out, among the first targets of the guerrillas were the official institutions of the state, especially local elected officials and public servants, including mayors and town council members, school teachers, nurses, doctors, health workers, etc. In some cases these officials were captured and killed by the guerrillas, while in many other cases they fled the conflictive zones, to live more securely in the cities. Mayors frequently set up shop in secure towns and cities, where they would carry out minimal official functions, such as processing of documents. They became known as "mayors in exile." With the official government gone, remaining local residents began to devise methods of restoring a modicum of public services. In the case of local government, *ad hoc* town councils were established. These councils generally took charge of education and health through the creation of a network of what became known as "popular" teachers, nurses and doctors.

Popular teachers were usually drawn from the communities themselves and were individuals with a bit more education than others. It was not uncommon to utilize as a primary school teacher an individual who had no more than five or six years of education. Popular nurses were often those trained by the guerrillas to handle first

aid, but little else. In many cases mid-wives from the local communities took on the role of doctors. Later in the war, the services of some physicians were obtained from abroad through the program "Doctors without Borders."

When the war ended, a slow process of the restoration of these individuals was begun. The "mayors in exile" began a slow process of return, which by mid-1994 had been successfully completed in all but two cases, where the mayors have not returned to their communities. A far more complex situation emerged with teachers and nurses. The popular teachers and nurses, having served their communities for more than ten years in some cases, are anxious to continue working in their professions. Communities, too, tend to want to see these trusted friends remain on their jobs. Yet the communities, as well as the teachers and nurses themselves, all recognize that training of these individuals is sub-standard. As part of the peace process, the GOES has offered to provide extended training courses for these professionals, lasting a year or more, to increase their skill levels. The training, however, is most efficiently offered in central locations, such as San Salvador. This implies that the popular teachers and nurses will have to leave their posts in their villages for long periods of time during which the GOES is likely to replace them with state-certified professionals. Communities and popular professionals alike fear that once the training is over, they will not be able to be reassigned to their old posts and might not be able to find a new post.

Other problems

One of the more difficult problems of reconciliation in El Salvador lies in the mutual distrust and even rancor that many citizens, community leaders, and local officials feel toward others who were once their enemies during the civil war. The savagery of the war, in particular the victimization by each side of members and supporters of the other, has left many scars. Despite a formal settlement of the conflict, at the community level people live as neighbors of individuals whom they know or believe to have victimized themselves or their families, often in horrible ways. Not surprisingly, civil society reflects this legacy of conflict, with many organizations having arisen either to promote change or to contain it and thus bearing the mark of ideology and violent struggle.

Many individuals with whom we spoke in community meetings and several mayors in the former conflict zones used the rhetoric of reconciliation at the local level: "We were all neighbors before the war and we must be again." "We have to work together." "We are not operating in a partisan way." The CDIE team was impressed at the degree of at least superficial reconciliation that had taken place in so short a time. However, the comments of other community leaders and mayors also still revealed significant vestiges of anger and partisan resentment. Many leaders from FMLN communities reported very low levels of cooperation from ARENA and PDC-dominated municipal governments. In the United States, after all,

there still linger animosities and cultural vestiges of our own civil war of the 1860s. One must therefore expect that, with its own brutal civil conflict so freshly ended, partisanship and anger will necessarily slow reconciliation in El Salvador and remain as a gradually diminishing sociopolitical problem for many years to come.

The Municipalities in Action (MEA) Program

Local Government in El Salvador Prior to 1986

The problems created by the war at the local level, as we have seen in the previous section, were very great. Moreover, any serious hope of resolving them at the local level would have been unthinkable if it had not been for the major transformation that occurred in local government in El Salvador beginning in 1986. In this section, we describe El Salvador's local government structure prior to 1986, and then describe its transformation.

El Salvador, like all countries in Latin America except Brazil, Mexico and Argentina (which have federal systems), has a unitary political system. This means that there are only two levels of government, national and local (i.e., municipal). The country is divided into 14 departments, and each department has an appointed governor, whose responsibilities are mainly honorific and representational. This means that citizen political participation in the form of making demands on the state must be channeled either at a lower level through municipal government or at a higher level through the national government.

Unfortunately, up until the municipal reform program of 1986 and the creation of the MEA program, local governments had so few resources and were so closed to citizen input that they were not a viable focus for citizen attention. National level government was also largely inaccessible to citizens because El Salvador does not have single-member district representation. Instead the *diputados* (national legislators) are elected through a proportional representation system on the basis of department-wide lists determined by the parties at the national level, a practice that leaves many municipalities unrepresented in the national legislature.[34] Furthermore, constituency-directed legislation steering national funds to specific localities ("pork-barrel" in U.S. terms)[35] is not permitted in El Salvador. This lack of single-member districts combined with the prohibition on pork-barrel legislation means that elected legislators have virtually no incentives to cater to local interests and pressures.

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[34]In 1991 a system of national lists was added to the province-wide lists, allowing for the election of 20 out of El Salvador's 84 deputies to be elected at the national level.

[35]Referred to as *partidas específicas* in many Latin American countries.

One unusual feature of local government in El Salvador is that for such a small country it has a very large number of municipal governments, 262 in all. Neighboring Costa Rica, more than twice its physical size, has about one-third the number of municipalities. The consequence of this large number of units is that most are quite small. In a country of 5.3 million people, only one municipality in El Salvador is very large, the city of San Salvador itself, with a population of 425,000. Two regional cities, San Miguel and Santa Ana are the only other cities that exceed 100,000 in size (202,000 and 182,000 respectively).[36] There are an additional 58 municipalities with populations that exceed 20,000 people. These 58, combined with the three largest cities just mentioned, represent 70% of the population of the country. The bulk of municipalities, totalling 201, have fewer than 20,000 residents, and of those 201, fully 143 have fewer than 10,000 residents (ISDEM/GTZ, 1993: 12; also USAID n.d.: 7)).

Unlike the departments with their appointed officials, the municipalities do have elected governments and hence a greater degree of responsibility to their citizens. But like the national legislature, the members (*regidores*) of municipal councils do not directly represent geographical constituencies (e.g., the *cantones* that make up the municipalities). Instead, the members and the *alcalde* (mayor) are elected at large on a slate in a winner-take-all system, whereby one party (or coalition that assembles a slate) wins the mayoralty and all the council seats at the same time, providing no scope for opposition leaders to have any official voice at the local level. Still, the council does have to seek re-election at the end of a three-year term, and so the system does ensure a degree of accountability, especially in the smaller municipalities where citizens are more likely to know their local officials personally.

Local taxes in El Salvador have long been among the lowest in the world, with rates totaling no more than 0.1 percent of GDP in 1991-92 (SIECA, 1994: 3-6). This national problem of low local tax base is compounded within El Salvador as a result of wide inter-municipal variation. While in some contexts it may well be true that "small is beautiful," this is not the case for many of El Salvador's tiny municipalities. For the most part, the smaller units are more rural and poorer than the larger municipalities. For example, the municipality of San Salvador in 1992 generated 87 colones per capita in local tax revenue, whereas Joroco, a municipality of 10,150 residents in remote Morazán Department, generated only 0.7 colones per capita. The municipalities also receive a subsidy of national taxes channeled through the *Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal* (ISDEM). This subsidy is based on population, but when added to locally generated funds, it only serves to widen the difference between large and small local governments. Including the subsidy, San Salvador's total per

[36]Population data are taken from the 1992 population census preliminary tabulations.

capita income in 1992 was 177 colones compared to 14 colones for Jocoro (ISDEM/GTZ, 1993:21).

Low per capita income in the smaller municipalities necessarily means low gross income for their governments. As in any organization, so too in municipal government there are clear economies of scale that allow large units to maintain efficient offices and service infrastructure (e.g., trash collection trucks). Smaller municipalities cannot generate sufficient gross revenue to cover the costs of running even tiny offices, let alone offer adequate services to their constituents. In the smallest municipalities of El Salvador it is not uncommon to find only a lone employee, usually a secretary, operating with an ancient typewriter, no filing system and no telephone.

It is ironic that the greatest damage in the war took place in the most remote, poorest municipalities of the country, because they are the ones least able to rebuild their infrastructure with their own resources. And the consequent absence of reconstructed infrastructure would naturally serve as a deterrent for the return of refugee populations. Parents don't want to live in towns without schools for their children, running water, electricity, health facilities, etc. Moreover, the failure of many refugees to return has further deprived the municipal government of tax revenue, thus creating a vicious circle that could not be broken with local resources.

The Municipal Code of 1986

In the late 1970s in El Salvador it became apparent that some kind of reform was needed in order to revitalize local government. A technical mission was contracted by USAID involving experts from the Brazilian municipal development corporation. They proposed a new municipal code which, because of the outbreak of the war in 1980, was set aside. But the principles advocated by the Brazilian team were not forgotten. The 1983 Constitution of El Salvador for the first time protected the autonomy of mayors. Then, in February, 1986 the new code was passed into law, abrogating the municipal law of 1908 (ISDEM, 1989). The centerpiece of the new legislation was to provide municipal governments with much greater autonomy from the central state, while at the same time making them more responsive to citizen demands. Up until the passage of the new code, municipal government was little more than an extension of the security apparatus of the Ministry of the Interior.

The new code granted many key powers to local government. Foremost among these was the authority to set their own fee and tax rates for municipal services, the preparation of their own budgets, and the hiring and firing of their employees. In exchange, the municipalities were given responsibility for local development, health, welfare, sanitation, tourism, industrialization, housing, etc. Legislative approval was initially required for changes in fee and tax rates, but in October, 1991 the legislature gave to the municipalities the authority for doing so for an indefinite period

of time (ISDEM 1992).[37] By May 1994, some 231 municipalities had passed new fee and tax rates. As a result, in 1994, municipal income nation-wide had increased by 174% over 1992 (SIECA, 1994: 24).

One of the critical problems of the poorest municipalities, especially those in war zones that have devastated service infrastructures or have never had basic services such as potable water and electrification, is that there is virtually no base of services upon which to tax. In the least populous municipalities, taxes upon public services, when they exist, and upon municipalities' civil registry functions will generate only minuscule and ineffective revenues. Thus even with their new taxing capabilities and possible property tax reform, El Salvador's poorer and more war damaged municipalities will face grave challenges with paralyzingly low resource levels.

While these increases in municipal autonomy and taxing powers are important, the most important change in terms of the development of civil society is in the opening of local government to popular participation. This came about as a result of the incorporation of three new measures in the 1986 municipal code: the *cabildo abierto;* the *consulta popular;* and the promotion of community-based grassroots organizations.

The Cabildo Abierto. Latin America, during the colonial period, inherited from Spain the tradition of holding *cabildos abiertos*, or open town meetings. In Central America the meetings were a mechanism established by the colonial administration for citizens to communicate their demands to the King of Spain. In El Salvador, as in most of Latin America, with the ending of colonial status, the *cabildo* fell into disuse. It was resurrected in the 1986 municipal code of El Salvador (ISDEM, 1989, Article 115) as a mechanism for the elected officials to inform the public of municipal decisions and for the public to raise concerns with those officials. By law, the mayor of each municipality must convene a *cabildo* at least once every three months (four per year). The law also specifies that all of the citizens of the municipality are to be invited, as well as the various community groups, cultural groups and trade organizations.

The Consulta Popular. The second mechanism for popular participation established in the 1986 municipal code was the *consulta popular*. This in effect is a mechanism for a referendum, the outcome of which is binding on municipal officials. The *cabildos*, in contrast, do not produce resolutions that are binding. Only citizens who can prove with their identity cards (*cédulas*) that they reside in the municipality are allowed to vote in these *consultas*. But since holding a *consulta* is left up to the town council, few if any *consultas* have taken place under this provision of the municipal code. Municipal officers see no reason to limit

[37]The provisions of the new municipal tax law can be found in ISDEM, Ley General Tributaria Municipal. San Salvador, April, 1992.

their autonomy, and are likely to hold a *consulta* only when they are sure of winning.

Grassroots Organizations. Under the terms of the new code, the municipality was given the power to grant formal legal status (*personería jurídica*) to grassroots organizations within the municipality. Prior to the new code, such status was only given by the Ministry of the Interior.[38] The code specifies that these community organizations must be comprised of no less than 25 members, and must be constituted via a community meeting during which at least one municipal official must be present. Moreover, the code established (Art. 122) that all associations that had been previously given legal status by the Ministry of the Interior would now be recognized directly by the municipality, and all files housed in the Ministry would be transferred to the municipality. The code further specifies that the municipal officials should meet periodically with members of the community associations in order to plan and execute projects of community benefit. On the CDIE team's field visits, we could find no evidence that suggested that either of these last two provisions was being followed in rural El Salvador.

The MEA Program

In combination, these measures dramatically increased the opportunity for civil society organizations to interact with local government. It is unlikely, however, that any of the measures would have been widely implemented, the code notwithstanding, had there not been an important incentive to do so. That incentive came in the form of funds made available by USAID through its Municipalities in Action (MEA in its Spanish acronym) program.

The MEA program was not initially, and never has been, a formal USAID project. Indeed, more than one USAID official commented that had MEA been projectized, it would not have had the flexibility that it did and probably would not have worked nearly as well as it did.

In 1986 GOES and USAID officials were attempting to find a mechanism by which they could provide emergency services to towns and villages affected by the war. Several prior efforts in that direction carried out by the national reconstruction program, CONARA (*Comisión Nacional de Restauración de Areas*) had not been very successful because outsiders did not know what the needs were in each locale, and there seemed no way, in the fog of war, to determine what those needs were. When the new municipal code was passed, it struck some unnamed USAID official that the *cabildo abierto* offered an ideal mechanism for measuring the felt needs of the community and that the newly empowered municipal council provided an excellent agency for carrying out the projects.

[38]Other organizations, such as unions, can get legal status from the appropriate ministry (e.g., the Ministry of Labor).

The MEA program began, channeling its funds through CONARA, with the stipulation that all projects eligible for funding would have to be proposed in *cabildos abiertos*. The hope, which appears to have been fully realized, was that such projects would have the support of the local populace. Clear evidence of the realization of that hope is that there is no record of a single MEA infrastructure project having been attacked by the guerrillas during the remainder of the civil war (i.e., 1986-1991).

After each town meeting, the municipal council met in private session and prioritized the projects, discussed them with CONARA, and developed the appropriate budgets and plans. In 1987 the program began in earnest, with a total of 35.9 million colones being spent on 684 public works projects. About half of those projects were school room reconstruction and road rebuilding. The remaining projects were divided among water systems, electric supply, community centers and municipal buildings. In 1988 the program was expanded to 79.7 million colones and 1,273 projects. In this cycle, 38% of the funds were used for roads, 24% for water systems, community centers and municipal buildings, 23% for schools, and 15 % for electricity projects. In 1989 the program leveled off at 72.0 million colones and 1,307 projects, but in 1990 experienced another large increase, expending 206 million colones on 2,036 projects (SRN, 1993: 11).

By early 1994, the MEA program had completed some 8,600 projects. Of those, 5,881 were completed with MEA funds, and 2,722 were completed using funds from other sources, expending in the process about US$ 135 million (Checchi, 1994: 42, 49). Three features of these projects stand out. First, audits by Price Waterhouse show that less than one percent of the expenditures were of a questionable nature (Checchi, 1994: 41). Second, efficiency studies have consistently demonstrated that projects initiated through the municipalities with MEA funds are far more efficient than similar projects initiated with national-level institutions. More miles of road, more classrooms, more water systems are built per dollar invested through municipal budgets than through the national budget.

These efficiencies are impressive, but, in terms of civil society, the most striking impact is in terms of the level of popular participation. The impact of the MEA incentive on popular participation is easy to measure. Prior to the 1986 code reform, municipalities had no open town meetings. As the following chart (Figure 2) shows, the number of meetings and the number of citizens attending increased steadily from 1988 (the first year that figures were kept) and 1992 (the last full year for which data are available). By the year 1992, some 853 *cabildos* were being held a year, or about 80% of the minimum required by law (i.e., 262 municipalities x 4 meetings/year = 1048). In 1992, however, there were still a number of mayors, perhaps 20, who were functioning in exile and were unable to hold the required number of meetings. For example, partial data for 1993 show that in the Department of Morazán, an area very heavily affected by the war, less than half of the required number of meetings had been held. By 1994, however, it

would not be surprising to find near-100% compliance (Checchi, 1994: appendix J).

While we have no way of knowing how much actual citizen input has been directed toward the municipalities through the *cabildos*, visits to over a dozen communities by members of the CDIE study team revealed that in every one some sort of community-level committee exists.[39] In many cases these are informal groups, not yet possessing legal status. In those cases the committees are often referred to as "*directivas*." But it is equally clear that, whether formal or informal, municipal officials are accustomed to meeting with leaders of those groups. Indeed, in every *cabildo abierto* observed,[40] community groups were in attendance, making specific and in most cases written demands for projects.

[Figure 2 about here]

Public Opinion of Local Government in El Salvador

There is significant evidence that the MEA program is working, not only as an efficient means to deliver services to Salvadorans in war-damaged areas, but more importantly as a means to increase prospects for a stable democracy. In a public opinion survey conducted in the second quarter of 1994 with national probability samples of approximately 1,200 citizens in each of the region's six countries, El Salvador stands out as having higher levels of participation in and more positive attitudes toward their municipal governments.[41]

As is shown in Figure 3, while for Central America as a whole 11.3 percent of those interviewed had attended a municipal meeting, El Salvador stands out as having far higher attendance at municipal meetings than any other country. The difference is statistically highly significant (F ratio <.0001). Moreover, evaluation of the services provided by municipal government is more favorable El Salvador than it is in any other country, as can be seen in Figure 4.

[Figure 3 about here]

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[39] In addition, CDIE team member Seligson had visited more than a dozen Salvadoran communities in earlier work, with similar results.

[40] By Seligson in his earlier work. Unfortunately, the CDIE team's trip did not coincide with any *cabildos* in communities that it was able to visit.

[41] The survey was designed by Mitchell A. Seligson of the University of Pittsburgh, and was assisted by Jorge Castillo Velarde (Guatemala), Ricardo Córdova (El Salvador), Rafael Díaz Donaire (Honduras), Andrew Stein (Nicaragua), Miguel Gómez B. (Costa Rica) and Orlando Pérez (Panama). The field work was carried out by CID Gallup of Costa Rica as part of their regular omnibus surveys.

[Figure 4 about here]

These positive findings are likely the result of the *cabildo abierto* system found in El Salvador. It is difficult to imagine that such a positive image would have been rendered prior to the initiation of the MEA program, but unfortunately there are no hard data to prove that case, inasmuch as earlier opinion surveys did not address such issues. These findings reported in Figures 3 and 4 are consistent with those of the recent Checchi (1994) evaluation of the MEA program in El Salvador. So while it is not possible to draw any strict cause-and-effect inferences from these findings, it would appear eminently reasonable to conclude that the MEA program must have contributed in some real way to El Salvador's higher showing on these local government measures.

Other Programs

As critical as it is to the development of civil society, the MEA program is not the only enterprise involved in constructing civil society in the rural areas. In this section, we review the GOES program being administered through the SRN, the Ministry of Interior's effort being implemented through its Communal Development Organization, as well as several other municipal government strengthening organizations.

The SRN's NGO program

Not all of the funds expended by the SRN for reconstruction are channeled through municipal governments via the MEA program. Of the $137.5 million allocated by the SRN between February 1992 and March 1994, not all of it has been given to municipal governments. Indeed, as shown in Figure 5 below, less than one-third of the funds are budgeted for MEA use. The remaining funds are divided between central government units such as the national electric and water services, and NGOs. Indeed, at more than US$ 52 million, NGOs take the largest share of all of the funds.[42]

[Figure 5 about here]

Over 100 NGOs participate in this SRN program, which in some ways serves as an alternative route to the mayors and *cabildos abiertos* in channeling reconstruction funds to the local level (the beneficiary NGOs are both local and national, and they spend their grants at both national and local levels). The SRN program is also more oriented toward social services such as health and education, whereas the MEA program is geared much more toward "hardware" such as building reconstruction.

[42] Figures in this paragraph are taken from SRN 1994: 5-6.

To receive funds, an NGO must prepare and submit an action plan and budget, and must comply with USAID monitoring and accounting requirements. The NGO prepares its plan, then meets with representatives from SRN, the Technical Secretariat for External Planning (SETEFE in its Spanish acronym, this is an agency of the Ministry of Planning) and USAID. If the plan stands up to this combined scrutiny, the NGO is then eligible for funding. Naturally, experience counts in such matters, and the NGOs with the proper experience are more likely to be government-oriented agencies that have received USAID or other foreign funding in the past than they are to be FMLN-affiliated organizations that operated during the civil war without detailed plans or elaborate accounting methods.

That this wide difference in experience puts the FMLN-oriented NGOs at a significant disadvantage has been recognized by USAID, which has directly and indirectly (through the SRN) supported several "umbrella NGOs" to assist and train NGO personnel in the bureaucratic arts of grant management and accountability. The Washington-based PACT (Private Agencies Collaborating Together) together with its Salvadoran collaborator PRODEPAS began by assisting about 41 such NGOs, then whittled its list to a dozen or so that appeared more capable of sustainable activity. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been assisting more than 30 NGOs along similar lines.

How successful has this effort been? A report from the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) issued in January 1994 found that disbursements have been somewhat slower than expected, owing partly to GOES delays in meeting USAID administrative requirements and partly to internal lags within the GOES (GAO 1994: 12-13). A second criticism has come from U.S.-based advocacy groups. One in particular, Hemispheric Initiatives, has reported a systematic pattern of excluding opposition-oriented NGOs from the SRN program (HI 1994: 16 &ff.).

A large part of the problem here is that USAID faces conflicting demands from two US-based constituencies. On the one hand, the USAID Inspector General insists that all grants in El Salvador as elsewhere measure up to the increasingly rigorous monitoring and accounting standards that it has set in recent years. The GAO tends to take a similar approach in its own investigative activity (e.g., GAO 1993 and 1994). On the other hand, American advocacy groups like the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and Hemispheric Initiatives, along with some in the U.S. Congress, insist that USAID must do more to include FMLN-oriented groups in implementing the peace accords of January 1992.[43]

It is very difficult to meet the demands of both these constituencies. If rigorous accounting procedures are to be followed in administering USAID support for the peace process in El

[43] For examples of Hemispheric Initiatives' reports, see, in addition to Murray et al. (1994), Stanley (1993) and Spence et al. (1994); for WOLA efforts, see Bland (1993), Sollis (1993), WOLA (1994). The GAO has also looked into this issue (GAO 1992).

Salvador, then the less bureaucratically skilled NGOs are going to lose out, i.e., those aligned with the FMLN. But if the FMLN groups are to be effectively included, then either the accounting standards must be modified or the groups must be radically upgraded in their capacity to deal with unmodified standards. By supporting umbrella NGOs like PACT and CRS, USAID has chosen the latter course, but it is a slow, uphill struggle. Advanced skills like proposal writing and bookkeeping are not easily imparted, especially to people who believe they have earned their right to share in the benefits of peace by dint of their years of effort under dangerous and trying circumstances of working in combative zones during the civil war.[44] Still, an effort of considerable scope has been launched through the umbrella NGOs. Offices within the USAID mission have estimated that one-third to two-fifths of the NGOs being supported under the SRN program in 1994 were sympathetic to the FMLN.[45]

Even so, the share of USAID funding received by these NGOs as of late 1993 appeared to be very considerably less than their proportion of reconstruction needs. The Hemispheric Initiatives report released in May 1994 estimated that only 0.62 percent of SRN monies for NGOs had gone to "opposition NGOs" during the February 1992-November 1993 period.[46] While this calculation is very likely off by some considerable magnitude, and the picture is apparently improving now that the umbrella NGOs have had some time to bring their client NGOs up to standard, it is clear that there is a great deal to be done in assuring the FMLN-oriented NGOs some reasonable share of the total funding available. Unfortunately, it may prove to be the case that, when the umbrella NGO efforts finally begin to bear serious fruit in the form of FMLN-sympathetic NGOs that can compete on equal terms with those of any other political stripe, the money supplied by foreign donors will have dried up.

The DIDECO program

We have far less precise data on community level organizations. One figure is from the Ministry of the Interior's *Dirección de Desarrollo Comunal* (DIDECO) organization, which claims that its 136

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[44] Another barrier for some NGOs may have been the absence of *personería jurídica*, but CRS advised the CDIE team that it could "front" for NGOs lacking this status in helping them qualify for SRN funding.

[45] One USAID estimate made in January 1994 cited 34 of 119 NGOs being supported to be "*simpatizantes con el FMLN*," while another (undated) tally cited 44 of 96 NGOs as "sympathetic to FMLN." Precise counts of NGOs supported are problematic, because they seem to enter the program and drop out regularly. The SRN in a March 1994 report (SRN 1994: Anexo 1), for instance, listed some 109 NGOs as participants in its program (though it did not cite their supposed political sympathies). The USAID and SRN lists are largely but by no means completely similar. The GAO noted some earlier progress in upgrading internal management skills of FMLN-affiliated NGOs (GAO 1992).

[46] Murray et al. (1994: 17). This report generated considerable controversy across the political spectrum, and much of it (including the 0.62% figure cited in the text) has been vigorously disputed.

field promoters have formed 2,000 community development associations (*Asociaciones de Desarrollo Comunal* or ADESCOs) nationwide. The promoters try to form community groups, get them municipal-level *personería jurídica*, and formulate prioritized lists of community needs. They then encourage the ADESCO to take these demands to municipalities via *cabildos abiertos*. In some cases DIDECO itself has provided small levels of funding for community projects. If the project requires other donor or national agency aid, the promoter and DIDECO staff work to find the correct entity and help with proposal preparation, etc.

Two cases of civil society in action. Some case study material might give the flavor of the interaction of DIDECO, ADESCOS and municipalities. One such case the team was able to observe was in the village of Desagüe, a poor community on a rocky hillside on the Río Lempa in the Santa Ana Department that is split both by the rail line that goes to a cement factory and by the Lempa itself, we met Roberto López, the DIDECO promoter who has worked in the area for 17 years. He seemed to be a genuinely bright and enthusiastic individual, adept at working with the community leaders we met, helping them organize and identify their priorities, and in bringing them into contact with NGOs and government agencies who could provide technical assistance and financing for projects. López introduced us to four community leaders (officers of the *juntas directivas*) of two ADESCOs, one in Desagüe and the other formed by fishermen on the lake at Metapán nearby.

We spent some time talking to the Desagüe ADESCO leaders. Their community has 500 families, they estimated. They said their community center (a nice one) was built c. 1970 by DIDECO's predecessor agency. They said there was no organization then, and that the present ADESCO did not form until 7 years ago. Their projects included: (1) a Bailey bridge across the river so school children did not have to use the railroad bridge; (2) reforestation of the area and signage to discourage tree cutting; (3) sewers; (4) electrification of a neighborhood without electricity; and (5) sanitation. When asked if they go to *cabildos* they said that they did but that there are so many *cantones* (26 in all) in the municipality that it cannot attend to all the demand it has. Nonetheless, they continue to attend and push their projects in the hope that soon theirs will come to the top of the priority list.

ADESCOP is the ADESCO Pesquera, made of 5 fishing communities that surround the lake adjacent to Metapán. We met two very dynamic *junta directiva* members who took us to see the ecology of their community and explained in elaborate detail the nature of their problems. In essence, the ecology of their lake-based community, surrounded in part by a large area of agrarian reform in which many fishermen also plant some basic grains, is in a catastrophic state of decline. The area is badly deforested owing to wood cutting for fires and especially because a huge annual influx of temporary fishermen come during the dry season and cut trees to make rafts to fish from. Deforestation has also dried up the ground water of the area where there were once many springs but now none. The lake has a natural cycle of growing quite large in the winter with the rain,

then shrinking in the dry season. When the area of the lake is small, the fish population, mainly of stocked tilapia, is concentrated and easy to catch. The temporary fishermen come in for a month from outside, fish with large dragnets that take out virtually all fish and destroy breeding grounds and stock, and then depart, leaving the fish depleted, the community impoverished, and the lake in need of restocking. Several small cattle farms on the lake shore, including one of the former mayor, prefer to keep the lake's area small because it gives them additional pasture. They, therefore, at some point had dynamited a natural dike on the lake shore to lower the lake level. Finally, the town of Metapán has both a municipal landfill and untreated sewage that contaminates the lake.

The ADESCOP leaders spoke of their efforts, of over three years since the group founded, to: (1)reforest the slopes around the lake; (2) get the municipality to move the trash dump and treat the sewage; (3) build a dike to restore the lake to its natural level; (4) regulate fishing access to the lake to prevent its destruction by over fishing; (5) develop a self-financing restocking program; and (6) get some police support or vigilance over the area to prevent tree cutting and overfishing.

They had been to many *cabildos abiertos*, but had never had any support. The former mayor was a rancher on the lake shore and thus benefitted from lowering the level and opposed their efforts. He had blocked financing from the GOES *Secretaria Ejecutiva para el Medio Ambiente* (Executive Secretariat for the Environment or SEMA) for the project by protesting that it would flood the town of Metapán (apparently untrue). The mayor also failed to move the landfill or to get the town's sewage treated. The national government had been very unhelpful with their restocking efforts, with the national fishing regulation agency, and with requests from the ADESCO for additional police/vigilance, etc.

Despite these setbacks, these very dynamic community members had reforested 80 *manzanas* of land themselves with funding from the *Fondo para Inversión Social* (Social Investment Fund or FIS, a Central American regional operation sponsored in large part by the Inter-American Development Bank), were looking into building fiberglass boats to rent to other fishermen, had obtained outside funding for the dike (later lost), and then built up the dike themselves without outside money. They are aggressively seeking outside assistance with all this, and have hopes that the new mayor will be more responsive. He apparently is not a lakefront cattle raiser, so that is a source of some hope for them.

The ADESCOP leaders appear to be making excellent use of the DIDECO promotor and regional and national DIDECO support. They were able to get DIDECO and SEMA personnel at the national level to help them fight their battle with the mayor over the dike to raise the lake level. This is one of the most dynamic community groups one could imagine. It is energetic, contributes massively of own labor, works the bureaucracy and donor community effectively, and has clear objectives that directly respond to community needs.

Municipal Government Strengthening Organizations

As the case study of the fishing village makes clear, many problems transcend the geographical boundaries of an individual municipality. In order to deal with these problems, special department-wide committees, called *Consejos Departamentales de Alcaldes* (CDAs) have been created in each of El Salvador's 14 departments, which consist of all of the mayors from the municipalities of a given department. In order to stimulate projects at this regional level, MEA funds have been set aside to help fund these projects. As of September, 1993, 174,000 colones (about US$ 20,000) had been allocated to each of these department-wide projects (Checchi, 1994: Table I-4).

A second support organization is the *Instituto Salvadoreño de Desarrollo Municipal* (ISDEM). Founded in 1987, it has two primary functions. First, ISDEM trains municipal officials and employees to enable them to better carry out their responsibilities (ISDEM, Ley Orgánica, 1989). Second, it can borrow funds locally and internationally, and channel those funds to municipalities for development projects. In practice, much of these funds have been used instead to subsidize the salaries of municipal officials and employees, since local fee and tax rates have been inadequate to cover those salaries. In 1993, for example, ISDEM provided 16 million colones in salary subsidies to municipalities, with over half of that going to San Salvador alone. An additional 22 million colones went for social and economic development projects (ISDEM, Memoría de labores, 1993, Anexo 1). Recently, ISDEM has opened the *Escuela de Administración Municipal*, which has two programs: (1) short term training of municipal officials and employees; and (2) the *Carrera de Administración Municipal*, a two-year program for training city managers. In 1994 alone they have already trained 700 employees, mayors and councilmen, 500 of them before they took office.

Finally, COMURES (*Corporación de las Municipalidades de la República de el Salvador*) is an NGO comprised of mayors. This organization had existed in limbo for a number of years, but with the passage of the municipal reform of 1986 it was reborn. The purpose of COMURES is to promote municipal autonomy vis-à-vis the central government. In doing so, it has established important democratic principles of operation, the most significant of which is pluralism in its leadership. COMURES operates with a 28-mayor council, selected in proportion to the partisan distribution of cumulative votes cast nationwide in municipal elections. As a result of the 1994 elections, this gave the governing party, ARENA, 13 seats, the PDC six seats, the FMLN six, and a total of three for two minor parties. COMURES also has been instrumental in the formation of Departmental Councils of Mayors (*Consejos Departamentales de Alcaldes*) and pushing for pluralist representation in each. It is not uncommon in 1994 to find that ARENA holds the chairmanship of each of these councils, but the FMLN is given the vice-chairmanship in a number of them.

Tension has existed between COMURES and ISDEM, with the later exhibiting a "highly paternalistic and authoritarian style" (USAID,

Municipal Development Project Paper, 1994: 21). One difficulty is that ISDEM is heavily influenced by the Mayor of San Salvador, *primus inter pares*, and the governing party. Despite these differences, recently a more cooperative relationship appears to have been established between COMURES and ISDEM.

Challenges to Civil Society in the Process of Reconciliation

Few external observers were able to predict that the Civil War in El Salvador would eventually be brought to its conclusion via a process of negotiations. The war had been so bloody and the violations of human rights so widespread, that it appeared that the war could not be resolved through compromise. It is also surprising to see the progress that has been made in reconstructing the zones damaged by the war (though in the areas visited by the CDIE team it was clear that much rebuilding remained to be done) and, more importantly, the way in which political polar opposites have been able to engage in constructive dialogue. Yet there are many serious obstacles on the road to a lasting peace in this country. Local government offers opportunities for face-to-face reconciliation of conflicting civil society interests and demands, but it also offers opportunities for serious clashes that could erupt in violence. In this section we review those challenges at the local level.

Winner-take-all local elections

In municipal elections in El Salvador, as observed earlier, the winning party wins the mayoralty as well as all of the council seats. This leaves the losing parties with no voice and no council vote in local governance. Over the entire country, as shown in Table 5, the ARENA won 206 of the 262 municipalities or more than 78 percent of the total, a proportion quite in excess of its showing for the Legislative Assembly (where it got 45 percent of the vote and 46 percent of the seats). The PDC won some 29 municipalities, rather less than its 18 percent of Assembly votes, while the FMLN, in winning 16 (i.e., 6 percent) of the 262 municipalities, fell far short of its vote in the Assembly. To be sure, such comparisons between different bodies can only be inexact, but the point to be made is that the winner-take-all electoral mechanism in all likelihood distorts party strength in translating votes into shares of governance.[47] Specifically, at the local level it exaggerates the role of the nationally ruling ARENA Party and diminishes the voice of the FMLN. It is all the more important, then, that the FMLN be able to nurture its capability to participate in peacetime governance in those

[47] Interestingly, while there were allegations of serious flaws in the election, there were no serious charges of systematic fraud or of irregularities on such as scale as to have significantly affected the outcome. See Spence et al. (1994). No one suggested to the CDIE team that the FMLN could or should have won more than a small number of additional municipalities under any circumstances.

municipalities it has managed to win under the present electoral system, if the implementation of the Peace Accords are to work effectively in bringing it into the Salvadoran polity.

[Table 5 about here]

In a number of municipalities the elections were very close. Consider the province of Morazán, which was an FMLN stronghold during the civil war. In the municipality of Arambala, the FMLN won 198 votes to ARENA's 178. In nearby Cacaopera, however, the ARENA won, carrying 537 votes to the FMLN's 487. It is very common in other Central American countries for there to be some sort of proportional representation in local council seats, but the absence of this tradition in El Salvador increases the chances for the alienation of local members of the losing party. In the last election the candidates for both the FMLN and ARENA committed themselves to changing the election laws and providing for some sort of pluralist representation in town councils, but to date there has been no official movement to do so. The result, then, is that at local level the party in power controls everything while the parties out of power and their adherents have no official access at all.[48]

This exclusion from participation might be compensated to some extent if the *diputados* to the national assembly had single-member legislative districts to which they were accountable, for then voters unrepresented at municipal level could hope to influence elections at the higher level. But as explained earlier, the *diputados* are elected at departmental level on slates sponsored by the national parties and thus have no direct accountability to the local citizenry.

NGOs as potential "counter-reconciliation" entities

In the municipality of Perquín, in the war-wracked department of Morazán, the CDIE team encountered distressing evidence of the failure of reconciliation. The FMLN won Perquín's municipal election in the March 1994 election, in large part because many of the municipality's residents are FMLN ex-combatants or FMLN sympathizers who fled to Honduras during the war and have returned. They have occupied land in the area that belongs to a handful of large landowners supportive of the ARENA or the PDC, whose property is now in dispute through terms of the peace accord. These large landowners have formed an organization called the *Fundación Perquín*, apparently with the blessing of the current and previous ARENA governments and the assistance of *Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo* (FUSADES), a USAID-sponsored private sector NGO/think

[48] In late November 1994, an agreement was reported between the GOES (i.e., the ARENA party) and the FMLN to arrange a proportional representation system for municipal councils. If this initiative comes to fruition, it would have to be counted as very good news.

tank. Under Salvadoran law, as a not-for-profit legal entity with national-level *personería jurídica*, Fundación Perquín may compete with the Perquín *alcaldía* for government reconstruction and program funds. The mayor of Perquín reported that during the election campaign, candidate Armando Calderón Sol, now president, had announced in a speech in San Francisco Gotera (the departmental capital in Morazán) that he would funnel Perquín's reconstruction funding through the "private" (i.e., non-FMLN) foundation instead of through the FMLN-dominated *alcaldía*.

We also learned in San Salvador that the *Fundación Perquín* is not an isolated instance. Rather, FUSADES has helped promote many similar foundations through its department known as FORTAS, which forms associations of businesses or business people at the local level into community level foundations. FORTAS then provides them with institutional strengthening training and helps them obtain national level *personería jurídica*, which enables them to receive development and reconstruction funds from the state and places them in competition with other local community development NGOs and municipalities. There are about 60 of these community foundations so far, as well as a coordinating NGO they have formed among themselves.

While this development and law are apparently positive on the surface, they constitute a potential threat to reconciliation of the Salvadoran polity. Such community foundations have at least partly the function of providing powerful local economic interests (especially in areas where the opposition FMLN or PDC parties have won power) a vehicle with which to compete for government funding with *alcaldías* and popular level community organizations. Further, should a proposed reform of the tax laws pass the National Assembly, such organizations could also become the recipients of payments from coffee producers that could be made in lieu of taxes. Thus they would assume some of the developmental and capital-spending functions of local governments, but without being subject to popular election or participation through *cabildos abiertos*. Such foundations would provide a vehicle for the ARENA government to comply with the local spending mandates of the national reconstruction program but simultaneously to avoid channeling funds through municipalities controlled by other parties -- a fundamental repudiation of the principle of national reconciliation. That the promotion of such foundations appears to have a high priority for FUSADES, El Salvador's most powerful and influential business lobby and think tank, does not augur well for the political neutrality of reconstruction programs in former conflict zones.

Sustainability of *Cabildos Abiertos*

Interviews with citizens who attend the open town meetings reveal that most attend because they recognize that there are funds being doled out to support projects proposed by citizens. Although in a 1994 survey of Salvadorans, 78% said that they would attend the *cabildos* even if no funds were available for projects (Checchi, 1994: 26), it is also true that 76% of those claiming to attend such meetings say they do so to ask for funds for community

projects. MEA funds and the entire SRN project will come to an end within a few years. At that time there will be a dramatic fall-off in funding for local-level projects, for it will not be possible with local municipal sources of revenue, even with major tax increases, to fully replace the money now coming from the national level. One wonders if interest in the *cabildos* can be sustained when the principal incentive motivating attendance is no longer present.

There is a keen awareness of the impact of the termination of external support for local government projects. As reported earlier in this chapter, recent increases in municipal fees have been an impressive enhanced source of revenue, but it seems unlikely that these new income streams could replace much of the MEA and SRN money for the smaller and poorer municipalities. In those with less than 20,000 inhabitants – which collectively account for about 30% of the population – only 8% of total revenue was raised locally in 1992 (USAID n.d. 2: 7-8), and even a dramatic increase could not make up more than a small portion of what will be lost when MEA terminates. For the larger municipalities, things are less drastic, in that a much larger proportion of total revenue has been raised locally to begin with. But the areas most in need of being integrated into the polity tend more often to be the smaller and poorer ones, so the problem is potentially a serious one.

even the most optimistic projections do not see these income streams replacing even a tiny fraction of the MEA and SRN money. At present, nation-wide, nearly 60% of municipal revenue comes from donations and central government transfers (RTI, 1992: 5).

An effort to build a more solid municipal revenue base is being undertaken by both ISDEM and COMURES in the drafting of legislation to create a local property tax. That tax, if implemented, could serve as a reasonable basis for local financial autonomy and could enable the cabildo system to continue to draw public support. At present, however, there is no local property tax.[49] In order to provide an incentive for municipalities to contribute to the funds required by MEA projects, USAID intends to require that, as of 1995, 25% of the cost of each project must be covered by non-MEA funds. In discussions with many mayors, they expressed great concern over this rule since they did not see from where the revenue would emerge to meet this 25% cost share. USAID has arranged with the SRN to have a six-month grace period in areas of greatest poverty, and apparently there is sympathy for extending that period for several years.

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[49] The USAID mission estimates that if the proposed property tax is passed and implemented, it should generate roughly the equivalent of what the MEA program has been currently spending (around ¢ 250 million), but that would be the aggregate national figure. It cannot be expected that the municipalities under 20,000 will be able to make up the 92% of their revenues that has been coming through MEA, but the GOES is contemplating making up this difference with central government transfers (communication from IRD office at USAID/San Salvador, 9 January 1995).

Self-sustainability of local-level NGOs

Community organizations, like all other organizations, have problems with self-sustainability. Groups tend to form around particular interests or shared perceived needs among the members. In communities -- especially small, poor, or underdeveloped ones like thousands throughout El Salvador -- there is always a surfeit of needs for community improvement. Despite the many and persistent needs for community improvement, sustaining a group over time is always difficult and often impossible. Among the possible causes of group failure are an inability to satisfy needs, leadership problems (loss of leaders, leaders' loss of support), internal divisions, and inadequacy of resources. Another factor is whether the group originated endogenously (in response to internally defined needs) or exogenously (responding to external pressure or motivation).

Because poor, underdeveloped communities are long on needs but short on resources and organizational skills, two critical self-sustainability problems them are: (1) finding resources for community projects; and (2) developing the organizational capacity to carry out projects. The GOES community development agency DIDECO (as well as its predecessor FOCO) originally promoted community organization by offering specific project funding, e.g., for community centers, food distribution, potable water projects. However, while that strategy provided resources it neither developed nor sustained community organization. In an attempt to have a more lasting impact, DIDECO has recently shifted its strategy away from funding projects and into promoting community organizational development. This new strategy consists of four elements:

- promoting or facilitating autonomous organizations (local community development associations -- ADESCOs);
- helping them identify locally felt needs for community improvement projects;
- providing organizational strengthening training to the ADESCOs; and
- serving as interlocutors with state and NGO agencies that have program funding that may fit locally defined projects.

DIDECO's promoters work in many areas of the country, now including some former conflict zones where they were excluded for many years. This strategy has resulted in the formation of many ADESCOs (DIDECO claims 2,000), some within FMLN-sympathetic communities, which have municipal *personería jurídica*. Our interviews in various communities revealed that many ADESCOs have identified needs and successfully obtained resources for them through municipal *cabildos abiertos* and, with the help of DIDECO promoters, even from national

government agencies and various NGOs.[50] The new DIDECO strategy has, then, solved some of the organizational and resources problems of many poor communities in the short run.

However, the new DIDECO strategy of forming ADESCOs has also contributed to what appears to be a middle- and longer-term vulnerability for community groups -- that of depending heavily upon external resources for problem solving. This tendency toward external dependency (upon the promoter and upon funding from outside the community) is magnified, we believe, by the vast quantities of external assistance that have poured into El Salvador during the civil war and, perhaps especially, since the peace accord. While it is of course rational to seek and use such resources, communities tend through the process to become heavily reliant upon what is, after all, soon to be a rapidly diminishing resource.[51]

The CDIE team noted that of the FMLN-connected communities we were able to visit in former conflict zones, only the most organized had given serious thought to or begun to develop strategies for surviving the inevitable decline of external assistance. Good examples here were Morazán Department's Comunidad Segundo Montes, Suchitoto's Comunidad de Reconstrucción de Cuscatlán, and Chalatenango's Cantón de Guarjila. These community groups had several advantages: they had long organizational histories during the war years involving repression, exile in Honduras, or militancy in the FMLN; and they had considerable earlier experience in working with external aid providers such as ACNUR and PADECOMNS. These groups thus have had organization, leaders, and a history of working together as communities for many years.

Perhaps the most striking case of external dependency we observed was in the repopulating village of El Mozote, site of the internationally notorious massacre of 1981 (see Danner 1994). The leaders who spoke for El Mozote's infant community organization seemed more oriented toward or dependent upon external aid and less self-reliant than those of any of the other communities with whom we spoke. The fledgling returnee community in El Mozote has received a fair amount of help from NGOs and government agencies, but its leaders seemed almost immobilized by a requirement that the

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[50]Other groups without DIDECO connections have also been very successful. One mark of the more successful community organizations has been the assistance of external actors, whether the promoters of DIDECO or those of NGOs such as PROCAP, PRODECOMNS, or others. Outside organizations and promoters know where funds may be obtained, can supply training that can help groups qualify, and help the groups prepare the formal proposals (carpetas técnicas) many require.

[51]The sources of external funding for projects appear highly likely to shrink dramatically within a year or so as foreign donors curtail their aid programs. While municipalities will continue to exist, and therefore constitute a reasonable long-term target for community lobbying, most current municipal funding for infrastructure projects comes from the MEA program. Municipalities will perforce soon suffer much reduced capacity to help communities with projects.

community contribute resources of its own in order to take advantage of for further assistance.

The high level of external dependency may well stem from aid being available to the El Mozote returnees from the very beginning of their reoccupation – even before they became organized. Furthermore, the El Mozote population was not political[52] in 1980-81, and became widely scattered during the civil war (unlike the returning populations of Segundo Montes and Arambala in Morazán and Guarjila in Chalatenango, who resided together in refugee camps). Perhaps some of the apparent external dependency of El Mozote therefore stems from a lack of previous organizational experience, of which there was a strong nucleus in each of the other *repoblador* communities, either through FMLN connections or through exile organizations that predated their return, or both. Almost all of the returnee population of El Mozote today had already gone into exile before the 1981 massacre, so did not experience the repression that informants noted helped bind together certain other returnee communities such as Segundo Montes and Guarijila. An additional contributing factor to El Mozote's apparently high external dependency may also be the relative youth of the El Mozote *repoblador* community as an organized entity. El Mozote only began to repopulate seriously in 1993.

Another self-sustainability problem for El Salvador's community organizations, especially in the worst-affected conflict zones, involves a virtual certainty that community groups will have an increasing failure rate with their project proposals. This will arise because the need and demand for reconstruction assistance so vastly outstrips available resources from NGOs, the SRN, FIS[53], and municipalities, and because these institutions will experience rapidly shrinkage in their resources in the short term future. Most of El Salvador's community-generated project proposals to governments and outside NGOs, no matter how worthy, will never be funded. We spoke to numerous groups, both formal and informal, who had already experienced this -- they had petitioned their municipal governments repeatedly through *cabildos abiertos* but had not had their projects selected for funding. Indeed, some had never even received acknowledgement of the proposals from the *alcaldías*. While the leaders expressed a willingness to be patient, their disappointment at not being attended was also evident. Because need is so vast and resources are so small (and shrinking), community organizations that depend mainly upon outside assistance seem doomed to increasing frustration.

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[52] That is, according to accounts of the pre-massacre nature of the community, it was not aligned with the FMLN. This assertion is based upon the recent reports in the press.

[53]The FIS, the Fondo de Inversión Social, is a national program to help citizens deal with structural readjustment. It channels Inter-American Development Bank funds directly to local communities to replace infrastructure and services formerly provided by the government. Almost all Latin American countries now have a similar program.

The likelihood of repeated and continuous failure to get projects completed poses a significant threat to community-level civil society and to political reconciliation. Groups may become frustrated and wither, or they may become alienated from government. In communities that are in political opposition to the local ruling party (e.g., an FMLN-voting cantón in an ARENA-governed municipality), such frustration is already being perceived as stemming from partisan decisions. Residents of the FMLN-dominated Guarijila cantón in Chalatenango municipality, for example, recounted that their ARENA mayor attempted to ignore their demands by pretending that Guarijila was not even within his municipality. This does not bode well for partisan reconciliation at the local level.[54]

Such frustration effects will probably be more pronounced for groups that are the most externally dependent. Community organizations that generate resources of their own, through collective economic enterprises or through their own internal fund raising efforts, probably have a greater likelihood of avoiding such frustration. Even though self-funded projects may of necessity be more modest than those government or outside aid might fund, organizations that generate at least some of their own resources will probably experience less frustration and thus survive more successfully than externally dependent groups.

Our field notes reveal that almost all of the community organizations with which we spoke were very strongly externally oriented. With the impending resource implosion, many of these groups that have so energetically sought outside help will undoubtedly experience difficulties. Some may dry up and die, and the resultant loss of community level participation could reduce the amount and quality of democracy in El Salvador. Other groups could become angry and focus their resentment upon the government or their partisan opponents. The prospect of community anger turned toward municipal or national government is deeply troubling in El Salvador. El Salvador's governments have until very recently demonstrated extreme intolerance toward mass protest and confrontational behavior. Protests by community groups could tempt the security forces to resort to traditional repressive means -- a prospect that could destabilize the newly democratic regime and could undermine progress toward reconciliation.

Inequity in the Distribution of MEA Funds and the Implications for Reconciliation

When the MEA program began, it was designed to operate in all those municipalities where it could do so, which obviously excluded FMLN-controlled areas. The purpose was to help those communities that remained at least marginally loyal to the incumbent regime and by doing so, hopefully retaining their loyalty. During 1987-1990,

[54]The winner-take-all system of municipal elections may well aggravate such perceptions and inflame interparty hostility at the local level.

some 394 million colones was expended on 5,300 projects (SRN, 1993: 11).

When the war came to a close, USAID and the GOES modified their programs to cover all of the 115 municipalities labeled as "ex-conflictive zones." From February 1992 through March 1994, the SRN had programmed $43.8 million for municipal projects, and has actually expended $34.7 million on 2,070 projects (SRN, 1994: 16). The allocation of the funds for each municipality is based on a complex formula that appears to provide more funds for those areas with larger population concentrations.[55] In practice, however, the allocations are almost identical for each municipality, large or small.[56]

Missing entirely from the calculations used to allocate MEA funds are two factors that probably should have been central if the purpose of the fund was to help reconstruct areas damaged in the war. First, no effort was made to allocate more funding to those areas more heavily damaged. In some of the conflict zones the damage was limited to the destruction of a few telephone poles, whereas in others, all public and private dwellings were leveled. Second, the areas in which the damage was the greatest tended to be the areas controlled by the FMLN during the war and therefore were not eligible for the pre-peace MEA funds disseminated during 1987-91.

The net results of these two factors is that the reconstruction funding is not going to the zones in which the most damage was done. There is no catch-up provision to make up for the period 1987-1991, and there is no consideration of the extent of war damage in allocating MEA funds. Not coincidentally, in many cases these are the very municipalities in which the FMLN had greatest control during the war and continues to have the greatest popular support today. The reconciliation process therefore is faced with a stark reality: it is often helping least the municipalities that need the most. While the intent of the SRN is to be even-handed in the allocation of funds such that each municipality receives largely similar allocations of reconstruction funding, the effect of that policy is to make it appear to citizens and municipal officials alike in the most seriously affected conflict zones that the policy is rigged against them. One can only assume

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[55]The actual formula is based on the provision of a fixed sum, and then factoring in population size and poverty considerations. Further complicating the allocations is the fact that there are actually three separate "pots" of funds in addition to the basic MEA program: 1) the *Fondo de Incentivo Municipal*, given to those municipalities that hold regular *cabildos*, have increased their tax revenue and have made good progress on completing projects authorized in prior budget cycles; 2) the *Comites Especiales Departamentales*, which is funding for regional projects, and 3) the *Fondo de Fortalcimiento Institucional*, which is a fund for the improvement of municipal office management, such as computers and filing systems.

[56]According to printouts provided by the SRN, funds ranged from a low of 1.6 million colones per municipality to a high of 2.1 million, with the overwhelming number of municipalities receiving between 1.6 and 1.8 million.

that if this policy is not rectified, the reconciliation process will be damaged.

NGO Implosion

As discussed earlier, the foreign funding that has fueled NGO activity in El Salvador is soon going to decline rapidly. The donor pledges made after the peace accords were intended to run through fiscal 1996, and while no specific plans have been enunciated for the post-1996 period, the universal belief encountered by the CDIE team was that there would be a drastic reduction.

The concern that needs to be raised here is the future of these NGOs once the funds run out. It is obvious that present levels of NGO activity will not be sustainable once the reconstruction funds are expended. While many of these NGOs came into existence in order to meet specific immediate post-war needs and therefore their ultimate disappearance was anticipated, it is also true that organizations tend to take on a life and a *raison d'être* of their own. For example, several NGOs are focused on providing training for the ex-combatants. Presumably, once that training is completed, the NGO can dissolve. In fact, these NGOs are already making plans to provide continuing training to ex-combatants as well as many non-combatants, justifying their efforts with the truism that there are tens of thousands of Salvadorans who could benefit from vocational training. The upshot is that there are a large number of NGOs and their employees hoping to continue their existence indefinitely. What we can expect is a major NGO implosion when the funds dry up, leaving unemployed countless Salvadorans who have obtained employment in these organizations.

This implosion may well have an especially unhappy set of consequences for the FMLN-aligned NGOs, which, as we have seen, have gotten thus far a very small share of the funding provided by USAID through the SRN program. For just as efforts on the part of PACT/PRODEPAS, CRS and other "umbrella" NGOs to bring these organizations up to standard so that they can successfully apply for funding, the money will have begun to shrink. For that matter, it is probably not too much to say that foreign funding is likely to shrivel very radically indeed, as international donors after 1995 find themselves constrained to respond to new and different crises in other areas of the world.

All observers recognize that the impact of this decline will be profound. This is especially the case for civil society organizations, many of which have only begun operation in the post-civil war era and are at present financed largely or even exclusively from foreign sources. Soon, in addition to developing their substantive programming activities, they will become consumed with issues of sustainability. This looming threat to their continuation forms an underlying theme to much of this report.

IV. Reconciliation at the macro level

This report has focused at length on reconciliation and reconstruction of society at the micro level, both because it is vitally important to El Salvador's future and because in the view of the CDIE team it is at this level that the most valuable lessons are to be drawn for civil society-oriented strategies as an approach to strengthening democracy. But civil society is also important at the national level in El Salvador, and there are lessons to be distilled here as well for this CDIE assessment. This section will focus on four aspects of civil society at the macro level: human rights; elite reconciliation; the legislative assembly as a focus of direct interest group action; and environmental policy.

Human Rights and the Context of Civil Society

El Salvador's historical record of human rights has been one in which government and certain powerful economic groups have been extremely intolerant of civil society, especially of the organization and expression of the interests and policy preferences of working classes and of middle class elements promoting political reform. Repeated rural uprisings to resist usurpation of indigenous and peasant lands and state-enforced labor procurement systems were crushed by rural police, the army, and large landowners. Periods in which civil society has mobilized and pressed for political or economic reform (1927-1932, 1944-1948, 1959-1960, 1967-1972, and the late 1970s) have invariably been followed with violent episodes of repression by security forces and by paramilitary elements with links to security forces or powerful economic interests.

Given this record, a central issue for the democratization of El Salvador is the matter of political space for non-elite sociopolitical forces. The question concerns the tolerance shown by the security forces and allied economic and political interests for organization and political participation by other groups (professional, public interest, political, social, or labor). The explosion of human rights violations in the late 1970s and early 1980s was intended by the regime to demobilize civil society and to contain and prevent political participation.

Thus at first glance the civil war of the 1980s represented a further expansion or escalation of this repression of civil society. The military's main goal in the war was to defeat the armed opposition that had arisen mainly because of prior repression of civil society's demands for participation and reform. However, the war also involved a massive resistance to repression at levels unprecedented in Salvadoran history. Unlike the Matanza of 1932, repression in the 1977-1980 period failed to crush opposition participation. Indeed, it increased opposition, gave it focus, and helped make much of civil society revolutionary. The 1980s, then, gave rise to a dynamic unprecedented in Salvadoran history.

Instead of brutal state repression followed by a period of elite dominance and mass political passivity, this time the prolonged civil war and military stalemate led to a negotiated peace that promised a genuine political opening for non-elite participation.

The current human rights situation in El Salvador constitutes a measure of the political space available to civil society and of the freedom with which organized interests and individuals may participate. Virtually all observers contacted by the CDIE team find the human rights climate very much better in 1994 than at the beginning of this decade, and vastly better than it was during the late 1970s and 1980s. Jorge Salazar, head of the human rights office of ONUSAL, notes that in the last two years there have been almost no verified cases of forced disappearances, torture by police or security forces, or illegal executions.

The end of the civil war in early 1992 has eliminated repression to the extent that hundreds, and possibly thousands of NGOs operate openly in efforts to influence public policy -- organizing, lobbying, even mobilizing protests without reprisals. The armed forces have returned to their barracks and their numbers have been cut by half. A reform of the police proceeds through the continued training and deployment of the National Civil Police (PNC), an agency that appears (in contrast with its predecessor the National Police or PN) to enjoy the good will and hope for effectiveness and honesty of much of the populace. Parties of the left legally and openly contest elections. Members and former members of the FMLN and other leftist groups serve in the Legislative Assembly, on several municipal councils, and in myriad NGOs. Some of the opposition NGOs even receive government funding, although the amount is only a tiny fraction of all aid disbursed (HI 1994). Many community groups and other NGOs with leftist connections and even open FMLN links enjoy legal recognition (*personería jurídica*) conveyed by national government ministries or by municipal governments.

Finally, the presence of human rights monitoring and promotion agencies and NGOs also bolsters the human rights climate for civil society. The official *Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (PDDH), the national human rights ombudsman agency, operates offices in many departments and investigates hundreds of cases of alleged human rights abuses each year. Although still limited in staff, budget, and technical resources, the PPDH provides a venue and mechanism for individuals and groups to pursue help in defense of their rights from abuse by the state. ONUSAL's human rights monitoring office operated from 1991 through 1994 (it will close down in 1995), supplementing the PDDH effort with its considerably larger staff and equipment budget.

The Catholic Church's Tutela Legal, the principal denunciatory and advocacy NGO for human rights throughout the civil war, continues to exist and to pursue denunciatory activity. More than the other organizations, it tends instinctively to assume that any incident involving former insurrectionaries and their sympathizers are politically motivated by a rightist state. And while other

agencies may rightly think Tutela Legal to be somewhat shrill and reflexive in its denunciations, the latter in all probability provides a signal service to the cause of human rights by pointing with alarm to every conceivable wrongdoing and thereby offering more operating room to the more moderate human rights organizations to do their work. With Tutela Legal providing a degree of political cover, in other words, it is easier for the other agencies to get on with the job by appearing more moderate.

Several other NGOs that have promoted human rights also persist and are shifting their energies from primarily denunciatory to promotional activities by engaging in human rights education and training programs.[57] Nevertheless, the Salvadoran human rights climate remains far from ideal. Human rights observers, monitors, and activists ranging from the PDDH to ONUSAL to Tutela Legal all note continuing problems:

- The *Grupo Conjunto* (Joint Group), a study commission of UN and Salvadoran members, claimed in late July 1994 that death squads financed by powerful economic groups operated within certain military units during the 1980s and that at least some of them continue to exist with the objective of destabilizing the peace process (*La Prensa Gráfica* 1994a; 1994b; 1994c; 1994d).
- The PDDH reports frequent violations of basic constitutional guarantees of due process by civil authorities (PDDH 1994a: 29; 1994b: 7).
- Labor unions operate under severe organizational and legal constraints. Dramatic evidence of continuing problems in this area was the murder of an ANTA labor activist in early 1994.
- Several political activists, almost all with FMLN or other leftist organizational ties, have died violently – some obviously assassinated and others under unclear circumstances – during 1993 and 1994 (PDDH 1994a: 32-33; 1994b: 5-7).
- Human rights violations still occur with impunity. Virtually all observers agreed with Freedom House (1994: 243) that "underlying all rights abuses is the absence of an effective system of justice." They report that, especially in the most serious cases such as the murders of political activists, the national criminal justice system is understaffed, corrupt, and incompetent -- basically incapable of acting, investigating crimes effectively, prosecuting the accused, or levying and executing sentences.

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[57]The PDDH has taken a modest grant from the Canadian government and is employing it to help enlist several NGOs that have worked in human rights to develop a promotional capacity and role. In essence, the PDDH is creating an extension arm for itself by encouraging such NGOs to engage in training and promotional activities. In a similar vein, Tutela Legal has recent added to its denunciatory activities a new promotional function. Tutela has begun to engage in human rights education activity in Salvadoran Catholic schools.

In summary, since the signing of the peace accords, political space for much of civil society has expanded, especially for individual citizens and for a plethora of NGOs dedicated to providing services, training, and attempting to influence public policy in a variety of areas. However, the infrastructure for human rights violations in the form of death squads with links to security forces still exists. Moreover, expert observers and human rights monitors agree that the death squads still function, albeit in somewhat different modalities than during the war years. The incidence of assassination and unexplained deaths of leftist political activists and labor leaders in 1993 and 1994 cannot but have a chilling effect upon a segment of the CSO community with leftist antecedents and sympathies. In the words of Freedom House (1994: 243), "Although the 1992 peace accords led to a significant reduction in human rights violations, political expression and civil liberties continue to be restricted by right-wing death squads and military security forces that operate with impunity."

Elite reconciliation: the DEMOS project

Although it is absolutely critical to the sustainability of the peace process in El Salvador that the rank and file of the former combatants, their families and their supporters be productively integrated into national life, these elements are not the only participants from the civil war that must be melded into the national polity and economy. There are also the leaders from the two sides that must be integrated into national life in some kind of comity.

This process is in many ways simpler with elites than with the rank and file, because with the former it is essentially a process of *reintegration*, whereas with the latter the challenge is really one of *integrating* large numbers of people who had in most cases only a marginal participation to begin with. The FMLN leaders in many cases went to the same schools as their counterparts on the government side in the civil war, and in some cases are even from the same families. But in any event they tend to be well educated, cosmopolitan, middle-aged (thus more experienced) and used to dealing with other elites on terms of respect. On the other hand, the lower ranking participants in the war are largely less educated, provincial and much less experienced (after a 12-year war, many of them have known little else in their adult lives except combat).

But while it may be less difficult to reintegrate elites, it is still a sizeable task as well as a necessary one. For after all it was these same elites who made the FMLN into a formidable force and could presumably do so again if they were to conclude that the peace accords had failed. They must embrace reintegration if the accords are to succeed. And their former enemies among the national elites must come to accept them as legitimate participants in the national enterprise. Neither of these tasks is an easy one.

One ambitious attempt to deal with both challenges has been mounted by the *Centro de Estudios Estratégicos para Fortalecer la Democracia Salvadoreña* (Centro DEMOS), under the executive directorship of Leonel Gómez, a charismatic iconoclast who takes an obvious delight in tweaking the sensibilities of all sides while pursuing his self-appointed mission of establishing a *modus vivendi* between erstwhile conflicting elites. The center is supported with a US$ 1 million grant from USAID.

The centerpiece of the Centro DEMOS enterprise has been a seven-month "inaugural course" involving more than 50 leaders from all sides of Salvadoran life. The group includes members from professional and business associations, military officers from the army and the FMLN, newspaper editors, human rights advocates, university professors and political leaders from across the entire political spectrum. Some are from what might be called a first tier of national elites, while others are from the second rank. The course met in sessions lasting four hours, three times a week, for 26 weeks lasting from January to July 1994. The topics ranged from international banking through urban migration, delinquency and violence to privatization.[58]

The central objective of the effort was, in the words of the director, not to change minds among elites, for he thought that the chance of "converting people's minds" was remote. Instead, the main purpose was "to get them to understand where the others are coming from, what are their concerns." Not building consensus but rather creating comity was the major agenda.

When interviewed in July toward the end of the course, the director told us that attendance and enthusiasm had remained high throughout the long program. While we could not confirm that, we were able to attend one of the sessions, which was indeed characterized by a large attendance and much spirited discussion.

Can such an effort succeed? Surely the social dynamic at elite level that pulled the country apart into civil war is not going to change direction as the result of one seminar course, no matter how ambitious it might be. But there are at least two reasons to believe the idea has promise and is worth trying. First, as been mentioned elsewhere in this report, a vitally important ingredient of the peace process in El Salvador was that the leadership on both sides had concluded two things: the war was not winnable; and even an imperfect peace was preferable to continuing it. To the extent that this mindset permeated the thinking of participants in the Centro DEMOS course, they represented fertile soil in which the seeds of democratic pluralism could be planted.

The second reason for supporting the DEMOS enterprise is simply that if El Salvador is to become a sustainable democracy, then present and future leaders will have to adopt a common adherence to the rules of the political game, for no democracy can endure in the

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[58] A description of the course can be found in Centro DEMOS (1994).

absence of such a mutual acceptance among elites. The efforts begun by Centro DEMOS are as solid a step as one could imagine in that direction.

Civil society and the Legislative Assembly: lobbying through demonstrating

Generally attempts to influence state behavior at the macro level involve efforts to affect elite opinion through favorable media coverage, petitioning ruling party or ministry officials, perhaps by working through the legal system. In El Salvador there is also an additional form of lobbying that has developed since the peace accords, namely direct incursion into the Legislative Assembly, an approach taken up by demobilized veterans claiming their promised benefits. Veterans' groups have taken over the Legislative Assembly compound several times since the peace accords, demanding payment of indemnities they alleged were due them. Their most notable moment occurred in late September 1994, when hundreds of armed members of the *Asociación de Desmovilizados de la Fuerza Armada* (ADEFAES) seized control of the compound for three days, holding 29 deputies hostage. During their occupation of the assembly area, the veterans negotiated with the deputies and arrived at a GOES pledge to fulfill the promises made in the peace accords to reintegrate veterans into the national economy.

This occupation of the legislature is only the latest and most ambitious of many protests conducted not only by GOES army veterans but also by ex-FMLN guerrillas (who were promised benefits similar to those to be enjoyed by army veterans in the Peace Accords), government workers and even environmentalist groups on occasion. Most of this agitation has emerged since the Peace Accords, and there appears to be emerging a pattern whereby advocacy through protest, demonstration and force is coming to be directed at the Legislative Assembly, in distinction to earlier eras when pressure groups tended much more to target their efforts toward the executive branch (which was better able to resist them).

Needless to say, such practices do not augur well for Salvadoran democracy, when some groups decide that the normal avenues of lobbying and advocacy are insufficient and proceed to armed confrontations. And the very high probability that the GOES veterans have had acquiescence if not complicity from their former comrades in arms still in the military and police makes it all even less promising for democracy, for it argues that this one kind of group can more easily get its demands met, while others (who presumably do not have such connections) cannot do so. The danger, then, is that things may relapse into earlier patterns of access for a few to the largesse of the state combined with a denial for others, or, in short, a reversion to the elite control of the polity that has characterized the Salvadoran system in the past. One hopes that the present leadership will stand fast against such possibilities.

Environmental policy

Environmental concerns are relatively new in El Salvador, perhaps not surprisingly in a country which until very recently was consumed with civil war and in which what might be called socially oriented civil society energy was more narrowly focused on issues like human rights. The Salvadoran environment was not a high priority on many lists, domestic or foreign. As the civil war began to wind down, however, environmental issues did emerge into the daylight of civil discourse, to the extent that in 1991 the GOES initiated an environmental agency, the *Secretario Executivo de Medio Ambiente* (SEMA), located in the Agriculture Ministry at the time of the CDIE team visit but later transferred to the Ministry of Planning.

Today there are more than 25 environmental NGOs in El Salvador,[59] a number of which have quite active advocacy programs. There is also considerable international donor interest in support for the environmental sector. In addition to USAID, the IDB, UNDP and Canada are providing support to SEMA, with Denmark, the Netherlands and the Inter-American Foundation all reportedly beginning to allocate assistance to that agency. SEMA in turn is supporting some 25 NGOs in more than 50 environmental project activities.

For its part, USAID is presently supporting 13 projects that have at least some environmental component (USAID n.d. 1), of which one effort in particular has a very strong civil society component, viz., the US$ 2.1 million Salvadoran Environmental Non-Governmental Organization Strengthening (SENS) Project. The centerpiece of SENS is an endeavor to build the capacity of a small number of environmental NGOs in natural resources management. Implementing the SENS project is an American-based NGO, the Pan American Development Foundation, generally known in El Salvador by its Spanish acronym FUPAD (*Fundación Panamericana para el Desarrollo*). Presently, FUPAD is working with 17 NGOs ranging from the Audubon Association of El Salvador to groups concerned with reforestation and waste recycling. FUPAD helps these groups with organizing advice, planning training, and funding for office rental, equipment and even salaries.

One of the more advanced environmental NGOs participating in the FUPAD effort is the *Fundación Ecológica de El Salvador* (SalvaNATURA is the acronym it uses), which is best described as a mainstream organization linked into the Salvadoran business community through its board of directors. SalvaNATURA has thus far concentrated on "green" (forestry and conservation) issues, but is gearing up to engage in "brown" (pollution and toxic waste) agendas. The group has also taken on some natural resource management activities, in particular a new ecological park, the Parque Imposibile (a USAID

[59] Those interviewed by the CDIE team variously reported between 25 and 150 NGOs concerned with environmental matters at least to some degree. Estimates presumably vary according to how many of these groups are formally organized, possess *personería jurídica*, etc.

environmental debt swap operation that is part of the Environmental Initiative for the Americas). SalvaNATURA's approach has been to work within the system, pressing environmental ideas on SEMA and the Legislative Assembly, as well as a the regional level, where the organization's board chairman is the Salvadoran representative to the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development.

A somewhat different approach is that taken by the *Unidad Ecológica Salvadoreña* (UNES), an umbrella organization including more activist NGOs that focus largely on generating ecological consciousness. The UNES NGOs are more denunciatory in their orientation than those like SalvaNATURA, and more inclined to work the media in pointing to environmental abuses. In part as a result of their efforts a number of features have appeared in the broadcast media recently, as well as in the newspapers, especially *La Prensa Gráfica*. In the GOES, the UNES organizations tend to relate more to the Legislative Assembly, while those like SalvaNATURA work more easily with the executive branch, particularly SEMA.

It appeared to the CDIE team that there was something of a division of labor between the various kinds of environmental NGOs, with the more denunciatory groups focusing more on calling attention to problems and creating a sense of alarm, thereby making it easier for the more establishment-oriented organizations to work with the GOES in suggesting strategies and solutions. When suggested to those in the environmental field, this hypothesis (admittedly a simplification) was accepted to some extent.

A national environmental plan

Following the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, the GOES embarked on an effort to put together an national environmental strategy. This enterprise appeared to resemble similar initiatives undertaken in Bangladesh (see Blair et al. 1994: 43-44), where the government was developing an environmental strategy as part of a United Nations scheme following the Rio Summit at the time of the CDIE team's visit in the spring of 1994.[60]

Interestingly, both the strategies included a popular consultative component. In Bangladesh this consisted of 24 2-day "grassroots" workshops held around the country and including a cross section of farmers, housewives, local leaders and government officials, while in El Salvador the pattern was seven 1-day *consultas populares* held around the country, in which farmers, business people, professionals and local NGO leaders participated (See SEMA 1994a). In addition the mayors of the seven localities were interviewed at some length. Reports were compiled of the responses (SEMA 1994a, n.d.), showing some significant differences between environmental priorities ranked by the participants and those chosen by SEMA.

[60] The GOES plan appeared to have no connection to the United Nations, however, at least so far as could be discerned by the CDIE team. No one queried had any idea of such a linkage.

The results of these *consultas* were apparently discarded, or at least ignored, when SEMA drew up its actual strategic plan for the environment (SEMA 1994b). To the extent that this experience is indicative, things have a way to go yet before popular participation is a significant part of environmental policy in El Salvador.

Conclusion

Environmentalism is really just beginning in El Salvador. There has been some progress in drawing popular attention to important abuses and issues in the sector, which is certainly the first step, and some headway has been made in offering policy alternatives, but in the words of one observer, things are still "largely in the denunciatory stage." Another put matters more directly in saying that presently, "The best source of pressure on the government to improve the environment is not civil society but international donors." Clearly, there is still a good way to go before CSOs will make a significant contribution to environmental policy in El Salvador.

Table 1

Number of non-governmental institutions formed during five-year intervals, El Salvador

Years	Number of groups formed
pre-1945	2
1945-49	1
1950-54	2
1955-59	4
1960-64	10
1965-69	6
1970-74	9
1975-79	15
1980-84	18
1985-89	68
1990-92	51

(Source: UNDP 1992: 465)

Table 2

Political participation in urban Central America, 1991 by nation
(percent of respondents reporting activity)

Item	(N)	Region (3478)	Guat-emala (694)	Hon-duras (696)	El Sal-vador (697)	Nica-aragua (695)	Panama (697)
Contacted president		4.2	4.4	6.5	2.7	2.8	4.6
Contacted *diputado*[a]		7.4	7.4	16.8	4.4	1.7	10.0
Contacted mayor		12.6	15.8	22.2	10.5	5.0	16.4
Contacted government agency		18.1	13.7	31.6	14.0	8.0	24.8
Tried to convince others how to vote		26.1	14.1	45.7	7.8	19.8	45.9
Worked for a political candidate		22.9	9.5	45.6	7.0	20.7	29
Registered to vote		83.8	80.4	94.0	74.4	80.3	94.2
Voted last election		72.7	70.8	88.1	55.8	80.1	75.8
Attend union (sometimes or frequently)		9.2	11.4	15.6	2.3	12.1	10.4
... cooperative meeting (sometimes or frequently)		14.3	16.5	28.4	6.8	9.3	19.4
... professional association (sometimes or frequently)		21.6	19.7	42.1	15.4	12.0	22.9
... civic association (sometimes or frequently		15.2	18.4	18.5	8.9	9.5	31.0
Tried to solve a community problem		36.9	32.9	21.1	33.6	49.9	39.7
Attend school ass'n. (sometimes or freq.)		41.1	46.8	42.1	39.3	49.8	21.6
Attend community improvement group (sometimes or freq.)		23.7	29.6	23.0	24.3	22.3	25.0

Significance levels for test of differences of means across nations were <.001 for all variables shown in this table.
[a] Member of national legislature

source for data: see footnote 17 in the text.

Table 3

Civil liberties support indexes in urban Central America, 1991 by nation

(Mean Scores[a])

Item (N)	Region (4090)	Costa Rica (697)	Guate-mala (634)	Hon-duras (696)	El Sal-vador (696)	Nica-ragua (673)	Pan-ama (695)
Support for general partici-pation rights (GENRIGHT)	7.89	- [b]	7.06	8.07	7.47	8.32	8.46
Critics' right to participate (RIGHTDIS)	5.93	5.79	4.60	6.99	5.21	5.69	7.10
Opposition to the suppression of civil liberties (OSDL)	6.10	- [b]	6.25	5.82	5.25	6.45	6.78
Support for civil disobedience (CIVILDIS)	2.35	2.13	2.01	3.41	2.12	2.42	1.96
Overall civil liberties commitment index[c]	5.57	-	4.98	6.46	5.01	5.72	6.08

[a] Values are means on a 10-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" = 10 to "strongly disagree" = 1.
[b] The Costa Rican sample did not include the items from which this index was constructed.
[c] This index is an unweighted average of the other four indices (with the polarity on support for suppression of democratic liberties (SSDL) reversed for the sake of parallelism.
Note: All cross-national means differences reported (analysis of variance) are significant at the .001 level.

Source for data: see footnote 17 in the text.

Table 4

International donor assistance planned for El Salvador, 1992-1995
(total project costs in US$ millions)

DONOR	US$	Percent
Bilateral donors		
Germany	154.1	4.8
Japan	222.8	6.9
USA	947.9	29.2
12 others	104.5	3.2
Multilateral donors		
CABEI	285.2	8.8
EEC	159.1	4.9
IDB	968.2	29.9
World Bank	289.5	8.9
14 others	86.3	2.7
Four foreign NGOs	26.3	0.8
TOTAL	3243.9	100.1

NOTE: Only four foreign NGOs reported their plans to the UNDP; there are many others operating in El Salvador as well.

Source: UNDP (1994).

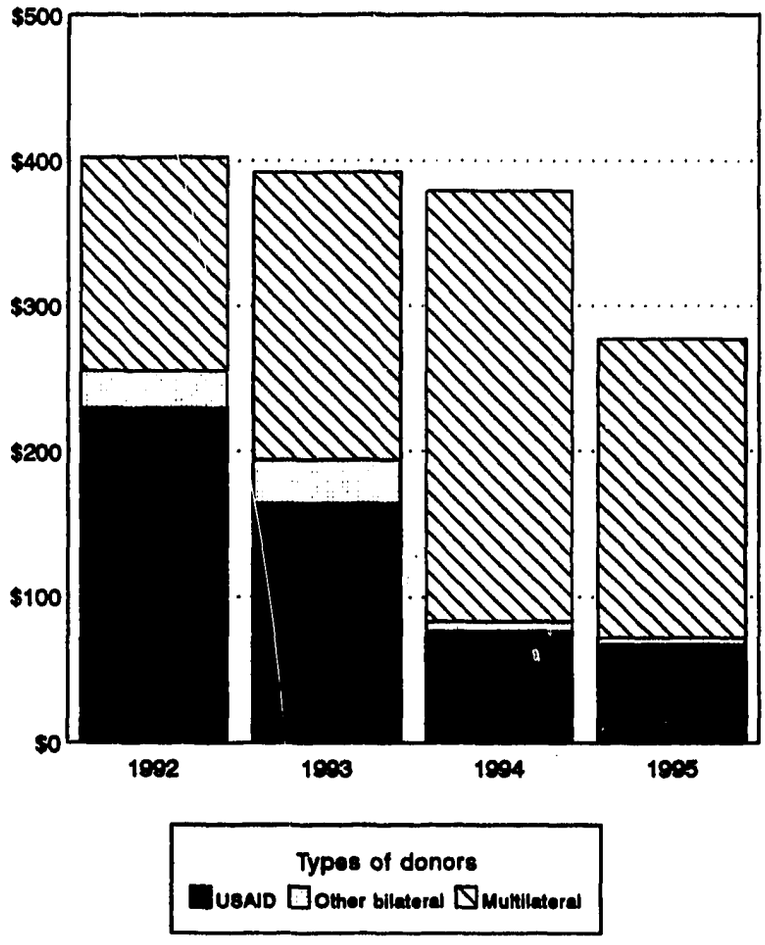
Table 5

Municipal election results in El Salvador, March 1994

Party	Municipalities contested	Municipalitiees won
ARENA (Alianza República Nacionalista)	261	206
PDC (Partido Demócrata Cristiano)	257	29
FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional)	172	16
PCN (Partido de Conciliación Nacional)	253	10
Convergencia Democrática	6	3
MAC (Movimiento Auténtico Cristiano)	102	1

Figure 1

International donor assistance planned for El Salvador
1992-1995
Millions of US$



Source: UNDP (1994: 1, 3)
Other bilateral donor figures are understated, as year-to-year figures were unavailable.

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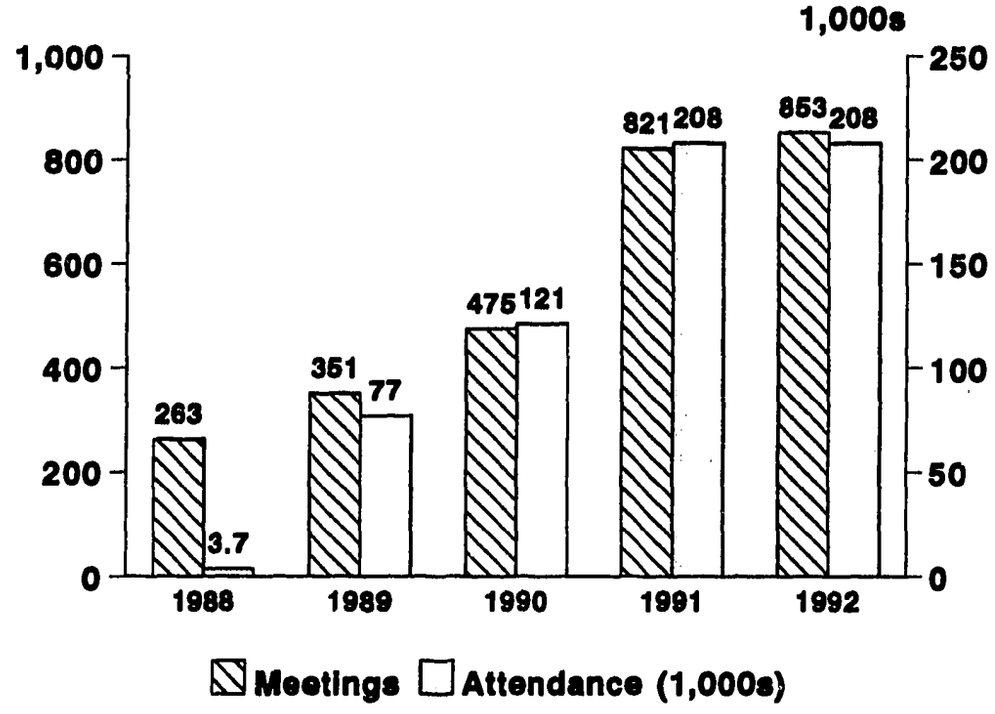
Figure 2

Open Town Meetings in El Salvador, 1988-1992

Number of Meetings (left-hand scale) and Attendance (right-hand scale)



Source: Checchi, 1994: appendix J, and SRN, 1993, p. 9

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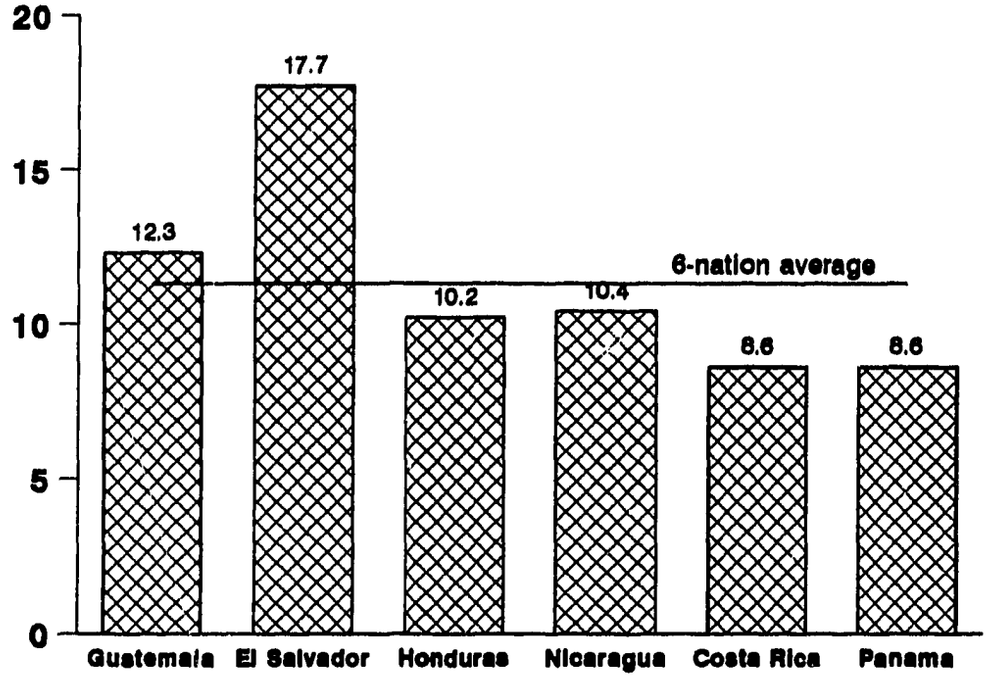
Figure 3

Attendance at Municipal Meetings, 1994
(percentage of respondents attending)



Source: Public opinion survey noted on page 37

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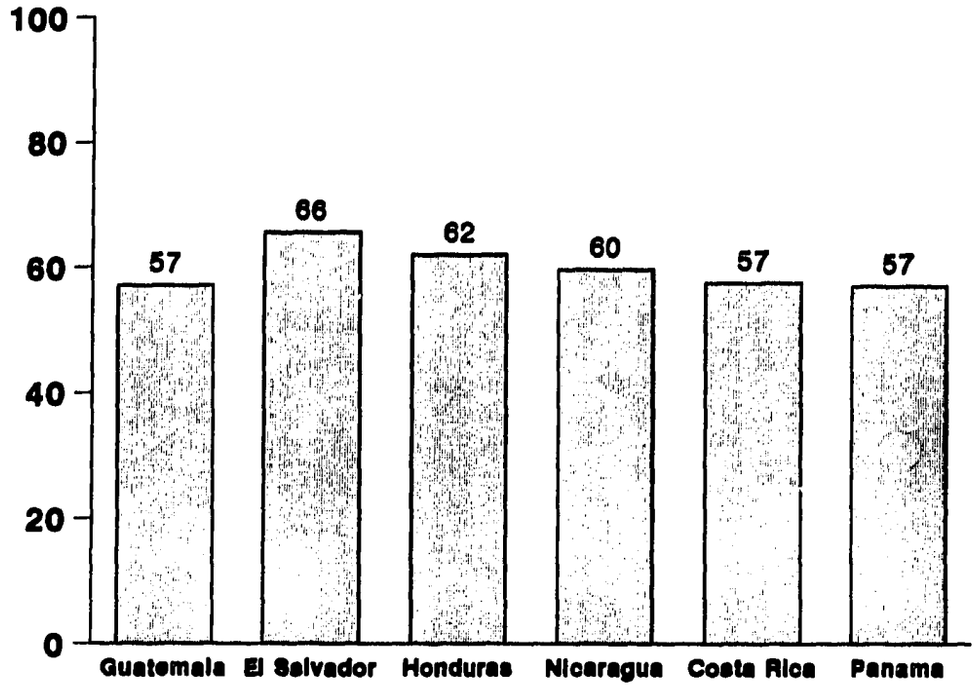
Figure 4

Evaluation of Municipal Service in Central America, 1994
Percentage approving service provided



Sample N = ca. 1200 in each nation surveyed. Source: Seligson et al., 1994

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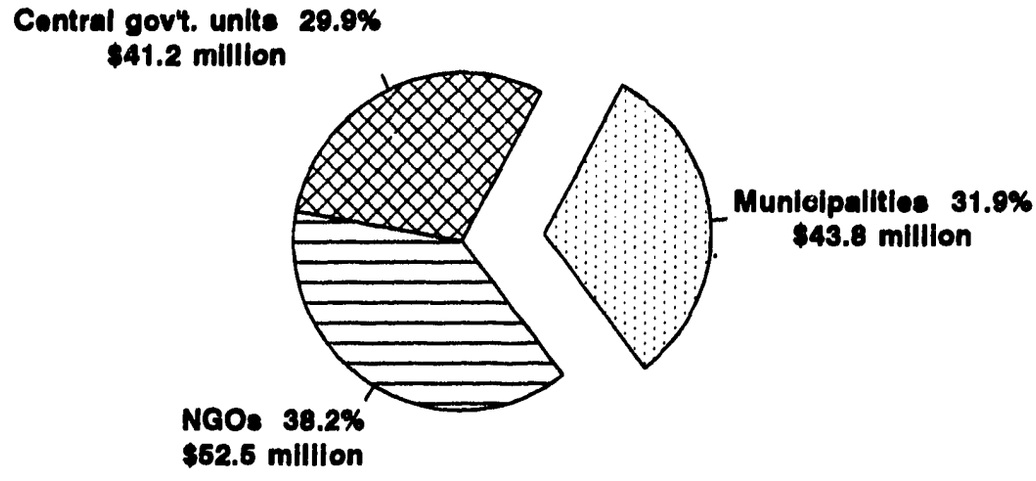
Figure 5

National Reconstruction Funds Budgeted, February 1992-March 1994 By Agency



Total funds: $137.5 million

Source: SRN, 1994, p. 5

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Annex 2. A profile of NGOs in El Salvador

A survey of NGOs in El Salvador is complicated by the fact that the very term Non Governmental Organization (NGO) is often employed in different ways. "Non-governmental" suggests only an extremely broad and a negative definition -- that of not belonging to the government (Cernea 1989; González 1991, Urrua 1993, Mata 1994). The definitional confusion stems in part from the variety of NGOs -- national, international, local; by origin and by the nature of their activities. Such immense variety makes it very difficult to discern their common denominators. They range from Christian base communities to professional colleges, business groups to unions, and include foundations, ecological and women's movements, and community development associations, among others.

This study defines a civil society organization (CSO) as a "non-governmental organization that has as one of its primary purposes influencing public policy (Blair 1994)." For our purposes here we will treat NGOs primarily as "private institutions for human promotion (e.g., CIPHES),[61] private development-promotion institutions (UNDP 1992), or private institutions for sustainable development (Mata 1994). Their principal characteristic is to serve as organizational networks for civil society -- that is, they are generated by citizen initiative and articulated and managed outside the state and not directly economic in nature (González 1991).

Some argue that CSOs should be differentiated in terms of two key missions -- providing services vs. interest representation. Service CSOs mobilize and incorporate volunteer social energy into service delivery. Interest CSOs engage in social mobilization in defense and promotion of their interests. Service CSOs consist heavily of staff organized for service delivery to target populations. In contrast, interest promoting CSOs are typically membership organizations with some capacity to mobilize their membership bases (González 1991:19).

Typology of Salvadoran NGOs

Following the pioneering study of Víctor González (1991) on Salvadoran NGOs, one may develop a typology based upon their level of organization.

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[61] This is the definition of the Coordinating Council of Private Human Promotion Institutions (*Consejo Coordinador de Instituciones Privadas de Promoción Humana* – CIPHES), founded in 1985 by 17 groups. CIPHES, which now has 45 member groups, coordinates non-profit NGOs, whether of national or international origin, that work with socio-economic development, human promotion, and strengthening civil society by providing technical assistance, consulting, training, and research.

High level of organization. These NGOs enjoy paid staffs, are legally incorporated, and their principal activities, services, or studies are directed outward toward the community. They can be classified according to their specialization in:

- services provided:
  - Humanitarian promotion, development, and assistance groups (e.g., CORDES, REDES)
  - Academic and scientific entities that conduct and publish research on national socioeconomic and political problems (e.g., CENITEC, CINAS)
  - Institutions for the promotion of the private sector (e.g. FUSADES, FEPADE)
  - Groups devoted to the prevention (through education, training and publicity) of natural disasters, workplace injuries, drug abuse, etc. (e.g., FUNDADALVA, FIPRO)
- administrative aspects (These groups pursue their goals through the volunteer efforts of their directors and members, and are financed by donated funds):
  - Philanthropic and beneficent institutions, charitable groups that operate in benefit of the indigent or needy (e.g. Lions and Rotary Clubs, Benjamin Bloom Hospital Association, etc.)
  - Emergency and rescue service institutions (e.g., Salvadoran Red Cross)
  - Cultural institutions, to protect national cultural heritage or promote cultural values and expression (e.g., the Atheneum Club of El Salvador)

Medium level of organization. This category includes organizations that combine service delivery with mobilizational activities. They employ a combination of paid and volunteer labor to develop programs and projects, and also engage in social mobilization. This includes:

- service-oriented groups:
  - Environmental protection groups that study, educate, and mobilize public opinion in order to promote legislation, vigilance, and execution of environmental protection projects (e.g., CESTA, Fundación Montecristo, Fundación Ecológica 20-30)
  - Gender-oriented groups that study the situation of Salvadoran women and implement development and aid projects directed at women (e.g., Foundation for Women's Studies, the Norma Herrera Institute for Women's Research)
  - Citizens rights organizations, whose objectives are to monitor, defend, and promote human rights observance and to educate and shape public

opinion (e.g., the Archdiocese of San Salvador's Tutela Legal, IEJES)

- mobilization-oriented groups:

  - Environmental protection groups that mobilize for the preservation of the environment, especially through ecology-related education, reforestation, vigilance, and denunciation campaigns (e.g., UNES)
  - Feminist organizations that mobilize women around feminist themes (e.g., National Women's Coordinator -- CONAMUS -- and the Association of Salvadoran Women -- ADEMUSA)
  - Human rights promotion organizations whose main activities are to demand that the state honor its human rights laws (e.g., Committee of Mothers of Political Prisoners and the Disappeared -- COMADRES)

Low level of institutionalization. This includes NGOs that promote the interests of groups and communities by mobilizing their members to give them negotiating strength vis a vis the state. They are typically led by elected representatives, and typically have paid staff only for internal purposes. They tend to seek formal legal recognition, but its absence rarely hampers their activities.

- Specialization in the promotion of common interests. These are private sector groups, engaged in the development and promotion of development and humanitarian assistance aimed at target populations:

  - Business Associations and Chambers[62], including the interest groups of large, medium, and small business (e.g., the National Association of Private Enterprise -- ANEP)
  - Cooperative associations representing different types of cooperatives such as savings and loan, consumption, transport, artisanry, agricultural coops (e.g., FEDECACES, COACES)
  - Professional colleges and associations, which both oversee a profession, accredit its practitioners, and provide services to members (e.g., Colegio de Médicos, Colegio de Arquitectos)
  - Labor unions and associations of peasants and workers (e.g., FENASTRAS, UNTS, UNOC)
  - Associations of the unemployed and laid-off, including groups formed by workers fired or laid

[62] For more information on business sector's articulation and development of civil society organizations, especially through FUSADES and its AID support, see Barry (1993).

off by the private sector or by state entities (e.g., CODYDES)

- Specialization in community-regional interests. These groups (whether rural, suburban, or urban) arise from citizen initiative within particular communities or regions, seek to promote local citizen participation and advance specific local interests, and sometimes articulate and coordinate with other similar groups. Their strength springs more from the legitimacy conveyed by their community base than from the personería jurídica that many obtain. They tend to be organized at increasing levels of complexity:

  - Local organizations tend to be very simple, with local assemblies electing a board of directors (e.g., Community Development Associations -- ADESCOs)
  - Inter-community coordination groups offer instances of cooperation among similar local groups within a broader geographical area. They consist of delegates of local community organizations to a coordination council (Example: inter-community coordinating council of southern San Salvador)
  - National coordination is more complex, involving the cooperation among various inter-community councils, typically formed by delegates from several inter-community councils (e.g., Salvadoran Community Movement, made up of 8 inter-community coordinating councils)

Annex 3. Persons interviewed

USAID mission, San Salvador

Austin, Allan, USAID consultant
Dreyer, Marvin, IRD
Gore, Peter, ANR
Greene, Jacqueline, ODI
Hawk, Thomas, IRD
Lynch, Raymond, NRD
McAward, John, Freedom house, USAID consultant
Miranda, Aldo, IRD
Novellino, Salvador, ODI
Pansini, Jude, Creative Associates, USAID consultant
Sheldon, Lynn, IRD
Steele, Carol, Program Officer
Sullivan, John, IRD
Theis, James (US Embassy, Political Section)
Thompson, Carrie, ODI
Worden, Richard, USAID consultant

Non-Governmental Organizations in San Salvador

Acosta, Jaime, FUSADES
Castillo Hernández, Maria Julia, Tutela Legal
de Chávez, Rosalinda, FUPAD
Galván, Guillermo, Porgrama de Capacitación y Apoyo
Gómez, Leonel, Centro DEMOS
La Fuente, Beatriz, PRODEPAS
Linares, Carlos Armando, SalvaNATURA
Maguiña Vallon, José, CRS
Maldonado, Héctor Armando, Desarrollo Investigación y Consultoría
Martell de Velásquez, Elena, CIPHES
Martínez de Dreyco, Ana Carolina, FUPAD
Pinto, Carlos, COMURES
Rosa, Hermán, Programa Regional de Investigaciones sobre el Medio Ambiente
Segovia, Alex, CENITEC
Sermeño, Mauricio, UNES

International (and other bilateral) organizations

Bouteille, Christian, EC
Connor, Michael, British Embassy
Garza, José, Office of Canadian Cooperation
Giesen, Richard, German Embassy
Kompass, Anders, UNDP
Lapaow, Regis, EC
Lecaros Zavala, Carlos P., Conferencia Internacional sobre Refugiados Centroamericanos
McGaughey, Stephen, IDB
Salazar, Jorge, ONUSAL
VanderZee, Jaap, EC consultant

GOES organizations

Baldares, Manuel, Técnico, Legislative Assembly
Benítez, Genaro, DIDECO
Berrios de González, Analista, Legislative Assembly
Cardona M., Italo Benjamín, Procuraduría para la Defense de los Derechos Humanos
de Dowe, Norma Hadée Rodríguez, SRN
González, Marco Aurelio, DIDECO
Medina, José Rene, ISDEM
Mejía Flores, Edgar Antonio, ISDEM
Molina, Alcides, SEMA
Morán, Denis, DIDECO

Field trips to departments of:

Chalatenango (Municipalities of Nueva Trinidad, San Antonio de los Ranchos; Canton of Guarijila)
Cuzcatlán (Municipality of Suchitoto)
Morazán (Municipalities of Arambala, Meanguera, Perquín, San Fernando de Morazán; Communities of El Mozote, Ocotillo, Segundo Montes)
Santa Ana (Canton of Metapán)

Washington, D.C.

Anderson, John, USAID/W (formerly ODI, San Salvador)
Ellis, Ken, USAID/W (formerly ARD, San Salvador)
Walker, William, Dept. of State (formerly U. S. ambassador to El Salvador)
Zuvekas, Clarence, LAC